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THE ROLE OF THREAT AND TIME PERCEPTION IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS.(U)  
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# LEVEL II

THE ROLE OF THREAT AND TIME PERCEPTION  
IN INTERNATIONAL CRISES

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
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fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by  
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This study explores the effect of two variables, threat and time compression, on the decision making patterns of the senior decision units in selected international crises. The investigation is focused on an analysis of decision makers and their actions during two major crises of the twentieth-century; the Greek crisis of 1947, and the US decision to intervene in Korea, 1950.

Investigation reveals that there are some common distinguishing characteristics of decision units under high stress and perceived limited time. Further examination develops a series of proposals for application of these findings to the particular needs of the military.



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#### ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THREAT AND TIME PERCEPTION IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS, by  
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This study explores the effect of two variables, threat and time compression, on the decision-making patterns of the senior decision units in selected international crises. The investigation is focused on an analysis of decision-makers and their actions during two major crises of the twentieth century: the Greek crisis of 1947 and the US decision to intervene in Korea in 1950.

Investigation reveals that there are some common distinguishing characteristics of decision units under high stress and perceived limited time. Further examination develops a series of proposals for application of these findings to the particular needs of the military.



DEDICATION

TO MY WIFE, JO ANN

Without whose help, encouragement  
and understanding, this work would  
have been immeasurably more difficult.

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## INTRODUCTION

"One of the great organizational problems for mankind is the control of violence or the control of conflict situations to the point that procedural institutions are adequate to handle it."<sup>1</sup>

It is unlikely that any student of mankind would seriously dispute this statement by Kenneth Boulding. Violence, conflict and war have been problems of major importance since history was first recorded. As man became more sophisticated in his approach to the world in which he lived, he also became more accomplished in his ability to generate violence and destruction. With the advent of the nuclear era, this frightful ability to destroy took a quantum jump to levels beyond the comprehension of any man. In such an environment the imperative put forth above, becomes considerably more compelling than it was even a generation ago.

The reaching of this goal has proved highly elusive. As of this writing, there still exists no general theory of conflict which is acceptable to the various social sciences.<sup>2</sup> Authorities in each field have tended to approach the phenomenon of conflict and its control from highly parochial viewpoints. If a comprehensive general theory is to be developed, it will require contributions from a wide range of social science disciplines: history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science and communications and organization theory to mention but a few.

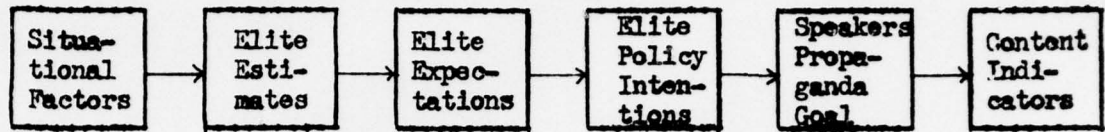
It is with this realization that this work is offered for inclusion into the body of research being done to narrow the gap that exists within and between the various branches of the social sciences. The objective of the author in preparing this work is to produce something

of value and importance, however modest, to the multi-disciplinary approach to the study of specific facets of the conflict situation. In this instance, the role of threat perception and of time in crisis decision-making. It is not claimed that this work provides definitive answers to all it studies, but rather than it is a positive addition to a growing body of knowledge dealing with a nebulous quality of existence called "conflict!"

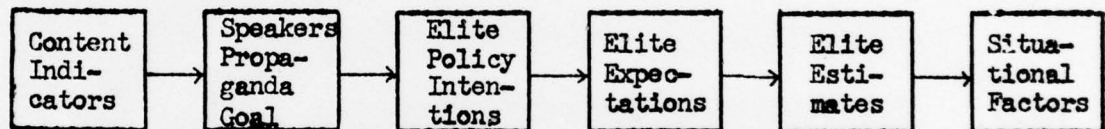
The two factors chosen for observation here (perceived threat and time compression) were not chosen in an arbitrary manner. As a student of military history, my attention has been drawn on numerous occasions to the saliency of these factors in crisis decision-making. It is the contention of the author that a better understanding of these two elements in the conflict environment can be of both immediate practical value to those who are expected to make decisions in high stress situations, and of longer range value in the development of more adequate hypotheses to explain the phenomenon of conflict in its many forms.

Because of the variation in information available, access to primary sources, and structural organization of that information which was available, the analysis of the crisis under investigation will be conducted using the traditional case study method or, as Ithiel De Sola Pool refers to it, a "qualitative analysis" approach.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the conclusions reached will be supported, in the main, by illustration and argument, rather than by attempting to quantify into mathematical values for presentation of a larger body of evidence. Qualitative analysis presupposes that the decision-makers were purposeful in their actions and communications, and infers goals, expectations, and attitudes by a reverse process than that used by the decision-makers. In some ideal world in which all required information would be available, the process of investigation could proceed

in the same manner in which decisions are made. The process might be graphically portrayed thus:



Unfortunately the real world is seldom in accord with the ideal model. As a consequence of the nonavailability of some documents and the impossibility of knowing definitely the unrecorded attitudes of key decision-makers, the analysis of information actually occurs in an adverse sequence. The process appears graphically in the following pattern:<sup>4</sup>



In each case investigated, extensive use is made of all primary sources available to determine the psychological state of the participants as closely as possible. Additionally, information on relevant symbolic behavior (such as the involvement of troops) was gathered to expand the researcher's perspective in viewing the crisis period in question.

As it is hoped that this work will prove fruitful to others pursuing similar research, so the hypotheses for the present study were selected from previous work by Charles F. Hermann in this field. The hypotheses to be investigated here are:<sup>5</sup>

1. As the perception of threat increases, time is seen as an increasingly salient factor.
2. As the perception of threat increases, decision-makers focus on immediate future needs to the exclusion of long-range considerations.
3. The shorter the perceived time available to decision-makers,



the fewer real alternative courses of action will be considered.

4. As the perception of threat increases, the number of decision-makers decreases.

Given the lack of consensus on basic concepts and terminology in the study of conflict and crisis, it is appropriate at this point to define key operative terms. Threat perception and time compression will be discussed in some detail in the first chapter, and so will be omitted here. The other terms which need definition are provided below. The particular definitions are those used by Kenneth Boulding in his book, Conflict and Defense (1962).<sup>6</sup>

1. Conflict - any situation in which both parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and each wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other.

2. Crisis - a situation of unanticipated threat to important goals values and restricted decision time.

3. Decision-making elites/group - that group of individuals which the person responsible for key decisions seeks to have available to him and whose opinions he considers important in the decision-making process.

A final introductory remark is briefly to explain the organization of this thesis. The reader has already been introduced to the methods to be used, and the importance of this study from the author's perspective. The first chapter will provide a conceptual framework with which to analyze the information presented in the case studies. The intent is that the reader will have a reasonable understanding of what happens to people in high threat situations characterized by compressed time, and can use this information to determine if the actions and statements of the decision-makers (DM) surveyed in the case studied fit this pattern.

The two case studies are organized so as to provide sufficient background information to put the decision-maker's actions in perspective. This is followed in each case by a detailed look at the crisis period itself and terminates with a discussion of the conclusions which can be drawn from each case.

The final segment of the thesis presents a brief review of the propositions under investigation, the posited actions under stress situations, and the conclusions drawn in the individual case studies. The results are then collected and synthesized, and some new working propositions presented.

A series of appendices and containing information that is relevant for each case study but is too lengthy or awkward to fit conveniently into the body of the study is provided for the convenience of the reader. A detailed chronology is also included for all crisis periods, and a list of decision-making units and/or maps are provided for each of the studies.

## CHAPTER I

### THREAT AND TIME PERCEPTION AND THE CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

According to Henry Kissinger, "What is relevant for policy" in times of crisis "depends not only on academic truths but also on what can be implemented under stress."<sup>7</sup> Observations by others who have experienced or studied international crisis vary widely. Consider the following:

"A decision-maker may, in a crisis, be able to work out easily and quickly what seems in normal times to both the "academic" scholar and the layman to be hypothetical, unreal, complex or otherwise difficult."<sup>8</sup>

"In every case, the decision (to go to war) is based upon a careful weighing of the chances and of anticipated consequences . . . In no case is the decision precipitated by emotional tensions, sentimentality, crowd behavior, or other irrational motivations."<sup>9</sup>

"I saw first hand, during the long days, and nights of the Cuban crisis, how brutally physical and mental fatigue can numb the good sense as well as the senses of normally articulate men."<sup>10</sup>

How do individuals and groups respond to the pressures and tensions of crisis? Do we tend to approach such situations with high motivations, a keen sense of purpose, extraordinary energy and enhanced creativity? Is necessity, as Kahn suggests, the mother of invention? Or, is our capability for coping with the problems impaired, perhaps even to the point suggested by Neustadt's phrase "the paranoid reaction, characteristic of crisis behavior?"<sup>11</sup>

The answers to these questions are always important for persons who find themselves faced with crises. They assume extraordinary significance when the individuals are national leaders and the context is that of



a contemporary international crisis: upon the ability of national leaders to cope with situations of intense threat may depend the lives of millions, if not the future of mankind. The purpose of this study is to attempt to improve on our present understanding of national leaders acting as decision-makers in time of grave crisis.

The thrust of this initial chapter will be to provide the reader with a theoretical map, or model, against which the actions of the decision-makers in the following case studies can be more easily understood. In an effort to facilitate the logical development of the model, the chapter has been divided into five major sections. The first section introduces the idea of conflict as a phenomenon, in broad perspective, and identifies the level of analysis and approach to be used.

In the second section, the Conflict Environment is described, through a discussion of its major components. In the third section of the chapter, the role of perception in conflict is set forward.

With the general conflict environment and role of perception thus developed, the fourth section provides a discussion of the two principle factors under investigation, threat and time. Decision-making behavior is here discussed in relation to the observed responses to high threat situations and restricted time (e.g., the phenomenon of perceived reduction in available decision time hereafter referred to as "time compression") and the effects of increasing threat. The fifth and final section of the chapter is the discussion of the conclusions to be drawn. The major points developed in the sections on conflict as a phenomenon, the conflict environment, the role of perception, and the effects of threat and time compression on crisis decision-making are combined to provide the intellectual setting for the case studies which follow.

### Conflict As A Phenomenon

Conflict as a phenomenon, spans the breadth of human activity. It is frequently divisive and destructive, causing a deterioration of the relationships between man and wife, friends, families, groups and nations. But, conflict can also be positive.<sup>12</sup> It plays a role in preventing stagnation, stimulating interest, providing a medium for airing problems, and it may provide a way to test and assess one's self. Politics, in its essence, is a conflict process by which limited resources are authoritatively allocated. Certainly it is well beyond such an undertaking as the present one to attempt to discuss and analyze all aspects of conflict. It is generally accepted that while conflict in its many forms is deserving of further study, of particular importance in this age of intercontinental missiles and multiple warheads is the study of potentially destructive conflict. Within this generally definable universe of conflict, attention will be focused on that part of the conflict environment that deals with crisis periods in international relations.

The choice of this restrictive definition has several roots. First, the study of conflict is in general a poorly defined enterprise; the more general one becomes, the more disagreement is encountered about definitions, appropriate boundaries, and analytical tools. Second, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that decision-making almost always is done in small, ad hoc groups during times of great threat to important values or goals.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the considerations of manageability, general agreement on important factors, and availability of relevant information led to the selection of the level of analysis.

The conventional method used in a study of this nature is to adopt either an individual or systemic approach to ordering information.<sup>14</sup>



However, the perspective used here is a combination of both, attempting to take into consideration individual traits such as temperament, physical fatigue and experience coupled with organizational factors such as intelligence estimates and advice of interested agencies which act to set the range of acceptable choices and alternative solutions. The section which follows will combine the salient factors from these various approaches and develop the setting, or environment, in which threat and time compression will be studied.

#### The Conflict Environment

The conflict environment which the decision-making elites occupy is not primarily a physical situation (although it may have some influence) but rather it is a mental and procedural construct which encompasses the decision-making group.<sup>15</sup> Conflict characteristically occurs through a process of escalation which can be over an extended period or a very short one, and blatant or subtle. This can be physical or psychological process, but its primary impact is on the state of men's minds; it is as Herman Kahn says a "competition in risk taking."<sup>16</sup> The purposes behind this escalation can be many. Generally they fall into motive categories, such as an intentional show or recklessness (intended to cause caution on the opponent's part), a demonstration commitment, or preparations for escalation by the opponent.<sup>17</sup>

However, escalation is not in and of itself conflict. Ole Holsti suggests that conflict occurs either from encroachment on another nation or its preserves, or from aggravated competition between two expanding national units.<sup>18</sup> The latter can occur either in the form of a physical effort to control or from an attempt to gain psychological/ideological dominance in a given area. Obviously, these conflicts can occur at

different levels of intensity and are frequently a mixture of economic, ideological, political and military factors. Resulting strategies and modes of resolution may shift as one or the other basic sources of power becomes salient.

An environment which is characterized by conflict tends also to have certain characteristics which define it. Karl Deutsch classifies them as: (1) identification of issues, (2) perception of threat and inadequate time, (3) a lack of territorial limits, (4) communication problems, (5) incomplete information, and finally (6) willingness to use force.<sup>19</sup>

#### Identification of Issues

The process of identifying the central issues is a deceptive one. It is closely related with, and, the major determinant of, a nation's willingness to go to war. John Burton notes that it cannot be assumed that the issues believed to be those in dispute are in fact the ones that caused the active conflict.<sup>20</sup> Normally conflict occurs after an escalation process in which issues are rarely clearcut and well-defined, rather they tend to go through a sublimation and transfer process by which they become intertwined with symbology of great emotional appeal within that society. Whatever the issues may have been, the conflict becomes one between the "good" (our nation) attempting to stand up for what is "right" against the "bad" (the other side). It is frequently the case that the event that leads to open violence is just the one that triggered the loaded gun.<sup>21</sup> Certainly nobody would claim that all Europe so loved Archduke Ferdinand that they were willing to risk their very existence for his revenge, or that America felt such a strong bond of kinship with the South Koreans that they were bound to come to the rescue.

### The Perception of Threat and Inadequate Time

The perception of threat, and the perception of inadequate time (time compression), are intimately and subtly related to the identification of issues discussed above. While the effects of threat and time on decision-makers will be presented in some detail in section four of this chapter, it is appropriate at this point to identify the central nature of threat in the conflict environment. It can reasonably be stated that a sense of threat is a necessary condition for a conflict environment to exist.

As the issues are identified by decision-makers, and various factors of the conflict environment come into play, they interact in the formation of a set of perceptions of the relationships between rival decision groups. These perceptions, though they may first be held tentatively, will come to be accepted as a true reflection of what is actually occurring. The sense, or level, of threat contained in these perceptions will directly determine the priority that that problem receives among the decision-making group. Additionally, it appears that as the perceived threat increases, some of the normal problem-solving capabilities become less effective. The perceived threat, then, acts to alter the decision-making situation. It acts, in fact, as a basic determinate in defining what type of problem-solving techniques can be or will be used.<sup>22</sup>

The sense of inadequate time being available to accomplish a given task, or "time compression", is also involved in this process of successively less effective decision-making. As the level of threat rises, time both becomes more important,<sup>23</sup> and is perceived as being less and less adequate. A more detailed discussion will be presented below, but suffice it to say here that time compression is closely related to



increased threat perception and effects the attitude of decision-makers involved.

#### Territorial Limits

As used by Deutsch, territorial limits can be physical, psychological or ideological. These territories, or spheres of influence, have roughly defined outer limits which frequently do not coincide with the conception of other states as to where these boundaries are. The psychological "territory" is closely related to the concept of "critical boundary" which will be explained further on in the chapter. Basically, it refers to the self-conception of that country's appropriate place and role among nations. An example of this might be Britain's self image as "keeper of the balance" and guarantor of safe passage on the oceans of the world prior to World War I. Ideological territory refers to the position along the continuum between the extremes of political posture and a struggle between two nations to claim the leadership in any given direction. The ideological conflict between China and Russia during the last 20 years is an example of this.

#### Communication Problems

Communication problem as an element in the conflict environment is significant enough a problem that a separate section on the topic will be presented later in the chapter. For that reason no more will be said about it at this point other than to indicate its role in the conflict process. That role is to make accurate gauging of the opponent's more difficult, consequently making appropriate responses to the opponent's actions a matter of great uncertainty.

#### Incomplete Information

The next characteristic of the conflict environment identified by

Deutsch was incomplete information.<sup>24</sup> John W. Burton, in his book, Conflict and Communications, noted during periods of crisis and attempts at crisis management, that by the nature of the limited time available, decision-makers are characteristically forced to make decisions on information they know is incomplete and only partially verified. Particularly since World War II, the mere volume itself of communications has become a tremendous problem. Messages are unexplainably delayed (as with several of the key messages in Korea in 1950) or cross messages from the opposing decision-makers (as in World War I). One of the great concerns of the Kennedy decision group was a fear of the Russians discovering U-2 flights over Cuba. They were forced to plan under the continuous realization that their available time could be cut to zero at any moment.<sup>25</sup>

A moment of reflection on the environment and characteristics above, and the framework these create, immediately point out that the concept of conflict environment is by no means a simple nor very straight forward one. Conflict may exist in ideological, economic, military or political spheres, or any combination of them simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the relative importance of any one area can, and will, vary at different times depending on its saliency to the decision-making unit.

With the overview of conflict and the conflict environment most complete, there remains one factor which needs to be discussed briefly before proceeding into an investigation of the role of perception in international crisis decision-making. This last factor which is germane to the discussion is the willingness of a nation to escalate and/or resort to violence and the process of identifying issues involved in a given conflict situation.

### Willingness to Use Force

The final consideration, that of willingness to use the force available, is a problem which is extremely **critical** to the calculations of all decision groups as they approach the point of war or no war. Willingness to go to war is a very complex phenomenon and almost wholly a product of that particular culture and forces available; the nation's critical boundaries are intimately involved in this process. The process is further confused by the phenomenon which Irving Janis calls "Group-think."<sup>27</sup> In his work on psychological aspects of foreign policy decisions he noted that decision-making groups are inclined to reject members who are nonconformist. The result is frequently a tendency to collectively accept a more dangerous approach than the individuals would choose on their own. The Americans are probably the best example today of a nation with tremendous war potential and an almost impenetrable fog around what issues will and will not cause a violent reaction. Certainly the Russians and North Koreans had every reasonable expectation that the United States would not put its armed forces in the balance for a country (South Korea) it had already said would have to depend on itself and was declared to be outside the US Asian defense perimeter.<sup>28</sup>

### The Role of Perception in Conflict

It is appropriate to note at this juncture that this work will deal strictly, to use Harold Sprout's terminology, with the psycho/milieu of perception of threat, and perceptions of compressed time, rather than attempt to determine if there actually was a high threat situation, and/or if there actually was adequate time. This position is both justifiable and appropriate in that the decision-makers studied reacted to the situation as they perceived it to be;<sup>29</sup> whether their perceptions accurately



reflected the real situation is of no particular consequence here. This section will provide the reader a discussion of the role of perception and the major factors that influence the perception development process.

Kenneth Boulding provides support for this approach to crisis investigation in his statement on the basic conditions that must exist for conflict to occur.<sup>30</sup> These basic requirements are stated to be:

1. Both organizations must be present in the images of the decision-makers of the other organization.
2. Decisions on the part of decision-makers must affect both organizations in value-significant ways.
3. Decisions must affect the image of the other organization so that the second organization is affected unfavorably.

Obviously, Mr. Boulding's emphasis is on the psychological perception of the situation. While some portions of reality may well affect any decision that an individual makes, it cannot affect the original decision process if the decision-maker did not perceive this reality or perceive it as relevant.

While it is almost impossible to identify for any specific individual the exact composition of his perceptual set, it is possible to identify the major factors which appear to influence the decision-making process, particularly those effecting high level decisions. Although the influence any one factor has on an individual's perception may vary, it will be comprised of stimuli falling generally into the categories of (1) culture, (2) communications, (3) spiral of effect, and (4) information. An additional factor, critical boundary, is included in this discussion as a particularly useful tool in understanding this specialized and narrow segment of perception development.

### Culture

A factor of tremendous significance in considering perceptions is culture.<sup>31</sup> All incoming stimuli are evaluated in terms of the reference images characteristic to the society of the receiving individual. Consequently, the effort to convey a particular message between persons of different cultures and heritage becomes almost unattainable when placed in a conflict environment in which there is no direct communications (a characteristic of virtually all conflict situations which led to war).<sup>32</sup> Studies have shown that information is limited by the conceptual framework of the receiving decision-maker, the tendency being to receive, select, or reject, information as it conforms to preformed belief/value patterns.<sup>33</sup> As Heniz Fischer noted: "The extent to which individuals/groups understand each other is a function of how much their world views and frames of reference overlap."<sup>34</sup> This problem of common reference also manifests itself in the great difficulty that is experienced even in developing a common "yardstick" by which each party can measure its respective power positions in a conflict.<sup>35</sup> Such measurement devices (which allow comparative measurements) tend to appear only in the resolution phases of conflict.

### Communications

A very complex field of study intimately connected with perception as developed above is that of communications and in particular what John Burton and Richard Merritt call "effective communication." Burton posits that whether a communication makes for harmony or conflict depends in large part on its content and perception of that content. He defines effective communication as "the deliberate conveying and accurate receiving and interpretations of what was intended to be conveyed."<sup>36</sup> Standing



as a formidable bloc to efforts to accomplish this are a host of difficulties, most connected with what is called the cognitive organization or process.<sup>37</sup> This is the system of categories for classifying and ordering the events of experience and language development and acts to restrict our understanding of the symbolic meaning of words.

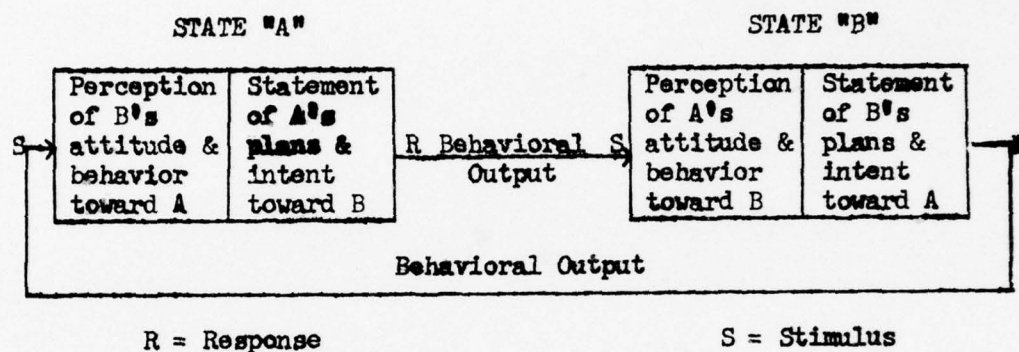
An important facet of this process of communications is that of feedback.<sup>38</sup> This mechanism is the means by which the decision-makers will evaluate the actual, or perceived, effect of its previous decisions in relation to what it had attempted to do. The ability of a given DM unit to accomplish what it set out to do will be in part a function of how well it is able to interpret this feedback information.

#### Spiral of Effect

The impact of perception, culture, and stress on the communications process has been studied by many prominent researchers in the field of conflict environment. In Conflict and Defense, Boulding discusses what is known as the Richardson Process.<sup>39</sup> This is a process by which a movement by one side so changes the field of the second side that he must move causing the first to move again, etc. This process is also called the "Spiral of Effect" and this term will generally be used in this paper.

An excellent example of the spiral of effect is the naval construction race between Britain and Germany at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Germany, with its "Copenhagen complex" desired a fleet adequate to cause Britain to think twice before launching a surprise attack (also called the "risk fleet" concept). Britain, however, perceived this as an insidious building program, intended to wrest control of the seas from Britain and put England at an enormous disadvantage. Britain's response was to increase her own building program, particularly in the Dreadnaught class,

thus aggravating and, to the German mind, substantiating Germany's fears, generating greater efforts on her part. This spiral of effect can, and has, led to disastrous results, if not effectively throttled. Richard Merritt's mediated stimulus-response paradigm of the process provides a useful model of this phenomenon:<sup>40</sup>



#### Information

Another aspect of importance in a conflict situation is the volume of information involved. Heise and Miller found that "the performance of a small group depends upon the channels of communications open to its members, the task which the group must handle and the stress under which they work."<sup>41</sup> As the volume of information directed at the decision-making group rises, the search for information within the communication system tends to become less thorough, selectivity becomes greater. Unpleasant information and that which does not support the group's preferences is likely not to be accepted unless the factual support is overwhelming.<sup>42</sup>

Holsti observed in his work on the communications process in stress situations that communications increased during crisis in an uneven manner--intra-alliance communications increased significantly while inter-alliance decreased. Also, as perceived threat rose, both incoming and outgoing

messages reflected increasingly simple and stereotyped assessments of the situations. This in turn caused the number of alternative solutions considered to be decreased.<sup>43</sup> The hunt for alternatives was also found to be restricted by tendencies for decision groups to get smaller and technological factors to decrease the objective decision time.

#### The Critical Boundary

Another concept which is closely related to those developed above, and which is useful as a cognitive or ordering device for understanding the actions of each nation as Communist China and Great Britain, is that of "Critical Boundary."<sup>44</sup> This is a verbalization of the idea found in the writings of many authors in the field that every major nation has a physical or psychological boundary or series of boundaries that, when penetrated, causes an increasingly disruptive reaction in the country whose boundaries are crossed, until such a point is reached that the violated nation feels compelled to go to war. The final (interior) boundary's protection is seen as an absolute imperative. No resource is left unused in the effort to keep any outside force from penetrating or establishing influence over it.

These boundaries are frequently a product of many influences, including tradition, the state of the military art and public opinion. Critical boundaries may or may not coincide with the actual physical boundaries of a nation/state. Two good examples of critical boundaries which extend beyond physical boundaries are Britain prior to World War I in France, and the Chinese Peoples Republic in Korea in 1950. Many of the documents released after the First World War showed that the key British decision-makers considered it unacceptable to have the north coast of France under the control of any power inimical to British sea power.



Britain's commitments and "informal" (and secret) talks between 1907 and 1912 were precisely aimed at ensuring a British presence in the area if need be.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of China, its extended critical boundary appears to run somewhere through the middle of North Korea.<sup>46</sup> Although the sense of "natural" borders extending beyond their current boundaries has long been a Chinese belief, an exact demarcation of this boundary was not even clear to the Chinese themselves until the US First Cavalry Division prepared to cross the 38th Parallel.<sup>47</sup>

This last case points out one of the insidious qualities of this phenomenon; it is almost never openly declared and may not be more than a vague formulation for the appropriate decision-making elites themselves. As a consequence, the ability of the opposing decision-makers to anticipate the psychological disruption that will occur and alter its own actions is virtually nil. Past experience seems to support the idea that one group becomes aware that it has penetrated this boundary only by the violent reaction it tends to precipitate after already having done so.<sup>48</sup>

#### The Effects of Threat and Time on Decision-Making

With the broad areas we call the conflict environment and the role of perception in conflict now discussed, and the significant factors relevant to this research which act on and within it identified, it is now possible to develop the role of threat perception and compressed time in crisis decision-making. For the purpose of this discussion, the definition to be used for threat perception will be that of Charles F. Hermann. He defined perceived threat as: "the degree of anticipated harm to the nation observed in both the semantics of crisis communications and in the character of situational fears."<sup>49</sup> It is necessary to say a word about

semantics; with the diversity of approaches to the study of conflict, it is not surprising that different authors use different terms to describe the same general phenomenon. In the author's research and in quotes in this work, the terms "stress" and in some cases "emotion" have been used as a synonym for "threat" as used here.<sup>50</sup>

#### Response to Threat Situations

George Grosser in his book, The Threat of Impending Disaster, identified the sequence a decision-maker goes through as he becomes cognizant of a threat.<sup>51</sup> Research has shown that an individual or group will not allow itself to stay in a situation of high stress (threat), but will utilize a series of escalating defensive mechanisms to attempt to settle the problem.<sup>52</sup> Grosser posits a three-stage process by which a threat situation is defined in a manner that is compatible with the receiver's cognitive organization. This series of mental processes serves to: (1) verify the aspects of the threat (nature, probability of becoming more severe, locus, timing and severity); (2) to authenticate it (definition, distortion of image, and selection); and (3) elaborate it (manageability, escapability, postponability, survivability and tolerance to it). The threat as thus conceptualized is then analyzed in relation to the importance of the threatened value or goal; that is to determine if it is a "shell" (relatively unimportant) or "core" (very important) value.<sup>53</sup>

#### Effects of Increasing Threat

Others working in this field point out that stress, or threat, at low levels of intensity, have positive effects on and indeed appear to be a necessary precondition to individual and organizational problem-solving.<sup>54</sup> For simple problems of a quantitative nature, moderate amounts of stress

can produce increased output for limited periods of time. Unfortunately, important political issues nearly always are marked by complexity, ambiguity, and the lack of stability, and usually demand responses that are qualitative rather than quantitative. It is exactly this qualitative ability that is most likely to degenerate under increasing stress or perceived threat.<sup>55</sup>

Most research findings suggest a curvilinear relationship between threat and performance; a moderate level helps, while increasing the level eventually begins to disrupt the decision process until finally it breaks down almost completely.<sup>56</sup>

A series of landmark investigations were conducted by Postman and Bruner on the effects of high threat on perception. Their conclusion was that:

"Perceptual behavior is disrupted, become less well controlled than under normal conditions, and hence less adaptive. The major dimensions of perceptual functioning are affected: selection of perceptions from a complex field becomes less differentiated from nonsense; there is maladaptive accentuation in the direction of aggression and escape, untested hypotheses are fixated recklessly."<sup>57</sup>

In concert with these findings, a host of researchers<sup>58</sup> have identified the following effects of high stress (threat) on decision-makers:

1. Increased random behavior.
2. Increased rate of error.
3. Regression to simpler modes of responses.
4. Problem-solving rigidity.
5. Diminished focus of attention.
6. Reduced ability to discriminate the dangerous from the trivial.
7. Reduced scope of complexity of perceptual activities.
8. Loss of abstract abilities.
9. Loss of complexity in dimensions of political cognition.



10. Lowering of tolerance for ambiguity.

11. Tendency of both decision-making groups to have mirror-images of their opponents options versus their own.

#### The Effects of Time Perception

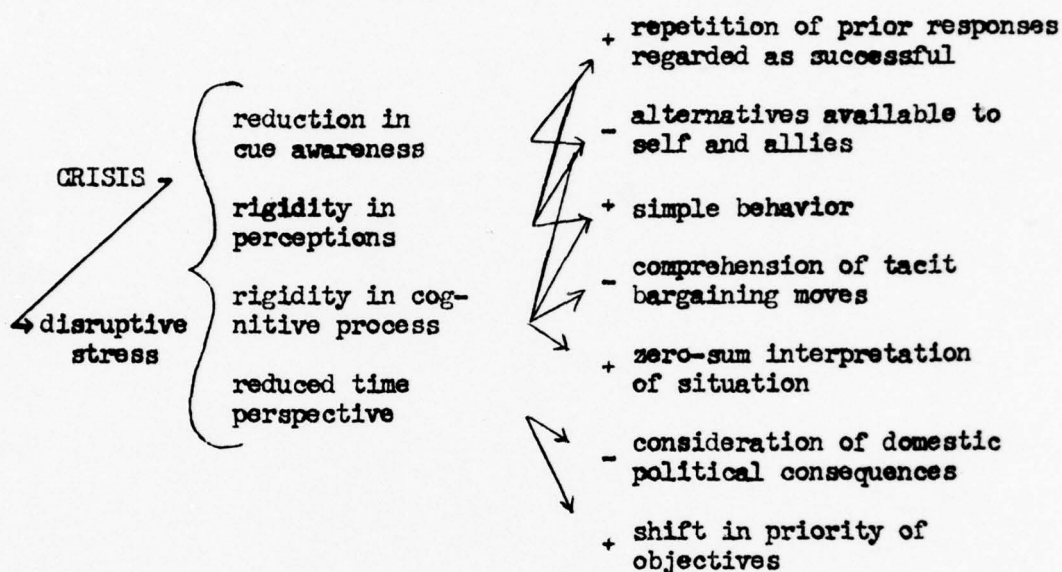
Closely allied with the phenomenon of high threat, and the other major factor to be investigated in this work, is the perception of the adequacy or inadequacy of time (time compression). As with threat perception, time perception is a critical factor. Generally, investigators have found that the ability to judge time becomes impaired under high stress--as the threat is perceived to become greater, time appears to move faster.<sup>59</sup> The case studies to be investigated here are particularly striking examples of this manifestation. Additionally, coordinated long-range planning is conspicuously not present in high threat situations as the immediate threat is perceived to be of such over-powering importance that long-range considerations appear to have little or no relevance.<sup>60</sup> Other manifestations of time pressure identified by several researchers are:<sup>61</sup>

1. Increased propensity to rely on stereotypes.
2. Problem-solving becomes progressively more disrupted.
3. Focus of attention is narrowed.
4. Impedes use of available information.
5. Impedes exploration of alternatives.
6. Creates early group agreement.

As Holsti noted in concluding his discussion of the above subjects in his book, Crisis - Escalation - War, "Evidence suggests the paradox that as the intensity of a crisis increases, it makes creative policy making both more important and less likely."<sup>62</sup> This author tends to agree.

It may be of some assistance at this point to depict graphically the relationship between high threat and time compression and individual and decision group reaction. The relationship on the individual level can be depicted as follows:<sup>63</sup>

Individual Reaction to High Threat

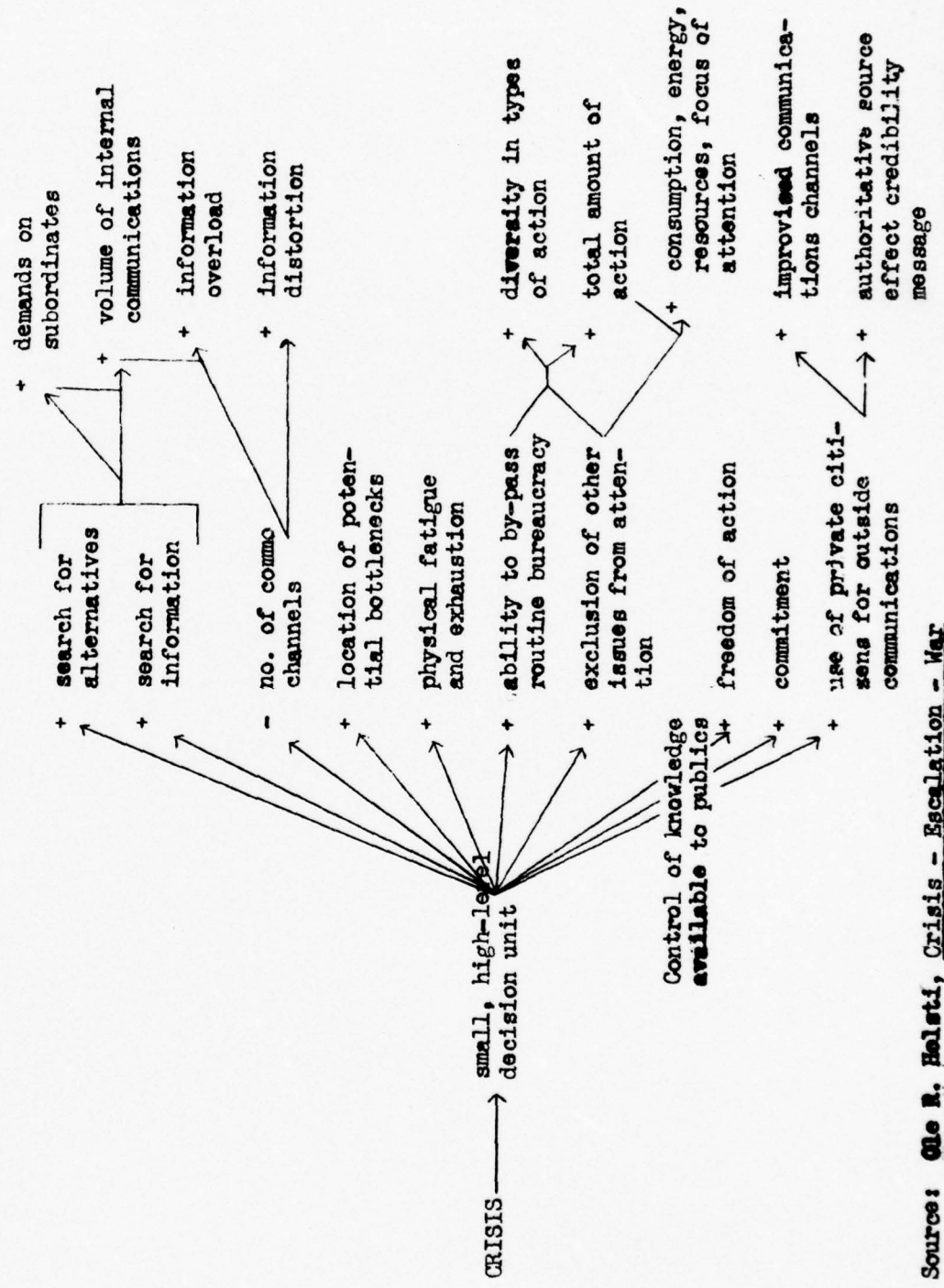


Source: Ole R. Holsti: Crisis - Escalation - War

Plus and minus signs indicate positive and negative relationships, respectively, for both diagrams. By way of comparison, the organizational response to high threat/time compression appears in the following manner.<sup>64</sup>



Group Reaction to High Threat



### Conclusion

With the major theoretical sections of the chapter now exposed to the reader, it is appropriate at this juncture to take a moment to reflect on the most important elements of the model as developed. As stated in the introductory remarks, the chapter was divided into five major sections. The theoretical portions of this chapter dealt with conflict as a phenomena, the conflict environment, the role of perception, and the effects of high threat and time compression on decision-makers.

The objective of the author in presenting the factors selected and the order of presentation was to provide the reader first with a general overview of the environment in which the decision-maker characteristically finds himself. It was seen that the individual(s) concerned must deal with a host of extraordinary influences in processing information and attempting to understand the situation they face. Frequently even the most fundamental problem, that of identifying the issues in dispute and their importance to the various competing decision-making groups, is itself not clearly resolved. Multiplying this sense of uncertainty in international crises are many factors which influence the decision-makers in both manifest and latent ways.

The decision group is directly confronted with the necessity of dealing with the considerable problems of attempting to communicate effectively their intentions and properly deciphering their opponent's actions. Additionally, the type, speed, and volume of communications itself creates considerable problems for the decision-makers attempting to cope with a crisis.

Intimately tied with these manifest problems of crisis periods are several factors which effect the decision process in more subtle, less well-defined ways. A vague sense of "proper" national territorial limits, which is almost never articulated, combines with the ramifications of "group-think", which lower the aversion of decision groups to the use force. Thus providing additional factors which become part of the total environment acting upon, and being acted upon, by the decision-makers in question.

It can readily be seen that the general setting in which crisis decisions must be made is ill-defined and continually changing. How individuals react to these changes was shown to be immediately related to how that change was perceived by the receiver. The intensity of threat perceived has a direct effect on the sense of critical boundary and the extent of the effects of the spiral of effect phenomena. Those factors tend to combine with the other influences characteristically present in the crisis situations to create a sense of rising threat to important values and perceived inadequate time in which to deal satisfactorily with the threat presented.

Once the reader had been introduced to the conflict environment in general and has seen the importance of perception in its processes, the hypothesized effects of threat and time can then be considered in somewhat greater detail. This section provided the model of how people in decision-making groups in high stress situations tend to react according to the theory to be investigated here. It was seen that they are expected not to allow themselves to stay in this situation for extended periods. As stress increases, qualitative abilities are expected to diminish, the individuals concerned may become less adaptive, have greater



difficulty with complex issues, and tend to accept untested hypotheses. Characteristically, their actions may be expected to show increased rates of error, problem-solving rigidity, and a reduced ability to discriminate the dangerous from the trivial.

Time compression in this theory is seen to have similar but separately identifiable traits of its own. Closely related to high threat situations, the decision-makers involved may be expected to sense that their reaction time is inadequate and that time is moving more rapidly than normal. Long-range planning, our theory would suggest, is generally not considered. The focus of attention in time compression situations we would expect to narrow, impeding efforts to explore alternatives. These forces, according to the theory, tend to move decision groups toward early consensus on a limited number of possibilities or on a specific choice.

In sum, the notion under investigation here is that threat perception and time compression have significant effects on decision-making groups in their efforts to react to situations in a conflict environment. The reader should now have before him a mental construct of the factors thought to be characteristically present in a crisis environment, and how individuals, if they are under the influence of perceived high threat and/or time compression, will be expected to react. In the following chapters the reader will be presented with two case studies involving different decision-making groups under crisis conditions. The reader is asked to keep in mind the characteristic actions and attitudes of those under high stress conditions put forward in this theoretical framework, and determine from the material presented in the case studies which follow, if the four propositions offered for investigation stand up to the light of actual experience.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EAGLE OR THE BEAR: GREECE 1947

"The gravity of the situation which confronts the world today necessitates my appearance before a joint session of Congress. The foreign policy and national security of this nation are involved. One aspect of the current situation . . . concerns Greece."

"The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand men led by Communists. . . . Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supportive and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply that assistance. . . . There is no other country to which democratic Greece can turn. No other nation is willing and able to provide the necessary support for a democratic Greek government. . . . I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. . . . I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political process."<sup>5</sup>

With this message presented to a joint session of Congress on 12 March 1947, President Harry S. Truman signaled to Congress, the American people and the world at large a change in America's role in the community of nations so profound and fundamental that it inalterably would move the United States into the leadership of the Free World and place it in juxtaposition with Soviet Russia. The statement of imperatives and principles presented, in part, above was shortly to become the basis for a series of interrelated economic, financial and military aid programs to a major portion of Western Europe. The perspective offered by historical distance tells us that the Truman Doctrine, as this collection of programs and policies is universally known, was instrumental in preventing economic collapse or Communist-inspired subversion. This is

true not only of Greece, which was the immediate impetus to the articulation of the doctrine, but equally so of the rest of the combatants of the Second World War save those under Soviet domination.

How is it that a nation which had rushed to disband its armed forces at the conclusion of World War II was seeking active confrontation with a foe who still maintained over 80 divisions in the field over a country to which it had claimed to have no commitment? Why is it that the senior political leadership supported legislative actions which would obligate the United States to international leadership of the Western World when all public opinion polls indicated fewer people thought international problems were of primary concern than in the late 1940s?<sup>66</sup> This chapter will attempt to answer these questions and to explore the role of threat and time perception as determinants in understanding the "how" and "why" of the far-reaching decision made during the week of 21-27 February 1947.

To facilitate an appreciation for the context in which this decision unit operated, the initial portions of the chapter provide the reader with the general historical setting and the external and internal settings which formed a significant element in the perceptual set of the decision-group. With the crisis environment thus established, the final two segments develop the decision week itself and draw conclusions as to the validity of the propositions under investigation.

GENERAL HISTORICAL SETTING: With the successful conclusion of World War II, the American people, and with somewhat less confidence, the American Government, looked forward to an extended period of peace and cooperation between the wartime Allies to reconstruct the economic and political structures so severely damaged during the past six years.



At the governmental level, this hope proved to be short-lived, if, indeed, it existed at all. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the British, supported by the United States, clashed with Russia over Greece. The two major Western Powers defended the British presence as a prerequisite to stability in the area, while the Soviets asserted that the British troops in Greece and the US ships in the Mediterranean nearby "insulted the Greek people."<sup>67</sup>

In what proved to be an early sign that Great Britain was no longer one of the major actors on the international scene, the British government requested US assistance in providing aid to Greece in the fall of 1945. President Truman, reflecting the noncommittal attitude of the American people, replied that aid would be extended if and when Greece worked out some of its own problems first.<sup>68</sup> Britain's problems were symptomatic of the whole of Western Europe. Recovery was not occurring at anywhere near the rate anticipated at the close of World War II.<sup>69</sup> This was perceived by the Truman administration as having highly significant economic and political ramifications if allowed to continue. Without a healthy and growing West European economy, the major prewar market for American goods would not be available to prevent US industry from slipping back into the prewar slump. Politically, the stalled recovery spelled turmoil and the opportunity for Communist Parties to gain access to the governmental apparatus.

The role that the Soviets intended to play in the postwar recovery process became progressively clearer by successive actions in late 1945 and early 1946. Then Secretary of State James F. Byrnes' experience in attempting to negotiate political arrangements for Eastern Europe convinced him that there was nothing to be gained by further negotiations even though

they continued pro forma until early 1946. His decision is frequently considered the de facto beginning of the policy of containment.<sup>70</sup>

From this period until March of 1947, however, US foreign policy continued to attempt to minimize the perception by the American public of just how irreconcilable the differences were becoming between the two superpowers. As Dean Acheson noted after Winston Churchill's famous American speech: "While many in the administration agreed with Churchill's famous iron curtain speech of 5 March 1946 at Fulton, Missouri, official effort was still not to endorse development of any anti-Soviet alliance but rather to work through the United Nations."<sup>71</sup> This policy decision played a significant role in the threat perception experienced in the Greek crisis, as we shall see later on.

March 1946 was notable for other reasons as well; this was the deadline for the Soviet Union to get its troops out of the portions of Iran it had occupied during the war. While this problem will be addressed more fully in the following section, as part of the immediate external setting, suffice it to say that the level of political pressure required to make Stalin consummate his earlier agreement to retire was a clear and unmistakable indicator of the manner and style in which relations would be conducted. By late 1946, American attitudes toward political organizational development and stability in Western Europe were essentially the same for past allies as they were for past enemies. American efforts to assist the reconstitution of Europe's political, economic and social fabric increasingly were seen as a means not only to overcome the economic interia experienced in the period immediately following the cessation of hostilities, but also to deny to Communist cadres the conditions necessary to create strong pro-Soviet leanings among the populace.<sup>72</sup>

The winter of 1946-47 compounded the economic problems. It was particularly bad for Europe; very cold weather with coal production ranging to only 60 to 72 percent of prewar years.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, the British economic upturn was abruptly halted as Commonwealth nations began to draw in their loans in US dollars, rapidly reducing British reserves. This was reflected in the United Nations Economic Report of 1947 which stated that Great Britain's economic situation was so severe that it could not afford to be active outside of Britain.<sup>74</sup>

The impact of all these factors is probably best expressed by Joseph M. Jones in his book, The Fifteen Weeks, when he notes:

"Such was the wider situation in 1947. Partly articulated and partly sensed from a knowledge of history and an evaluation of the stream of current information, it exercised an all-pervasive controlling influence upon the decisions underlying the Truman Doctrine and determined the breadth of the President's expression of policy."<sup>75</sup>

This, then, is the general setting from which the decision-makers drew their perspectives and expectations; it was a world of increasing tensions, rising levels of involvement and the beginning of a sense of critical boundary. For this situation to be useful in understanding the events of 21-27 February 1947, it needs additional focus.

EXTERNAL SETTING: As mentioned above, at the conclusion of World War II, the United States found itself in a position of leadership by default. The traditional Western World leaders (France and Great Britain) were unable to continue their previous roles.

Very important to the continued survival and rehabilitation of these countries was the assurance of open and free commerce. This, in turn, was dependent in good part on their "life line" through the Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean and Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>76</sup> Direct control or the friendly neutrality of the states of the Middle East was essential if



this route was to be secure.

Before developing the external and internal setting, it is important at this juncture to address a point of some subtlety. As noted in the first chapter, decisions being investigated here are those made under conditions of surprise or limited prior knowledge. In the case of the Greek crisis of 1947, as the documents and references will show, the US Government was aware that it would, at some point, have to supply a greater portion of the aid required by Greece. What allows this crisis to fall legitimately within the parameters established for this study is the suddenness, timing and manner in which a decision was demanded.

If the reader is to have an adequate appreciation for the decision-making groups' environment external to the United States, two significant events of 1946 need to be explored before looking at Greece itself. These are the US-Soviet clashes over Iran in March 1946 and over Turkey in August of the same year. It is important to realize that Truman saw these conflicts as contests of will. Additionally, he firmly believed that the Middle East was strategically important. If Russia were allowed to break the "barrier" of Greece, Turkey and Iran (Appendix D), it would gain direct access to the eastern Mediterranean and easily could move into any area and dominate the Suez Canal, Persian Gulf and India.<sup>77</sup>

IRAN: In August 1941, British and Russian troops simultaneously invaded Iran in order to keep the country's neutralist and Nazi-leaning leader, Reza Sha Pahlevi, from actively supporting the Germans and breaking the vital Allied transportation and communication lines that ran from the Persian Gulf to Russia. By mutual agreement, the Russians occupied the northern one-third; the British, the southern two-thirds of Iran with

a small neutral strip in between. The US Army, in its effort to support the British war effort, had support troops throughout Iran. These troops operated the Trans-Iranian railroad and the ports of Khorramshahr and Bandar-e Shahpur under the control of a US Persian Gulf Command.

On 29 January 1942, the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance was signed. One of the clauses of that treaty stipulated,

"... the forces of the Allied Powers shall be withdrawn from Iranian territory not later than six months after all hostilities between the Allied Powers and Germany and her associates have been suspended by the conclusion of an armistice or armistices."<sup>78</sup>

Soviet efforts to prepare for that day began as early as mid-1944. In September of that year, a Soviet Vice Commissar for Foreign Affairs arrived in Tehran, Iran's capital, and demanded exclusive oil and mineral rights in all of Iran's northern provinces. When, predictably, the Iranian government refused, the Communist-controlled Tudeh Party, under the protection of the Red Army in northern Iran, attempted to establish an "autonomous" region. By providing arms to their followers and refusing to allow the Iranian government troops to enter their zone of occupation, the Russians were successful in establishing an autonomous province and "electing" representatives to the national Majlis (Congress) on 12 December 1945.

This action catapulted the Iranian situation into an international crisis. The UN Security Council, after acrimonious debate, decided to have the two countries negotiate a settlement directly. When the new premier, Qaram-es-Saltaneh, arrived in Moscow on 19 February 1946, he was met with a virtual demand to cede Azerbaijan (Iran's northern region) to Russia. Specifically, the Soviets demanded:<sup>79</sup>

1. Indefinite retention of Soviet troops in some parts of Iran.

2. Recognition of the autonomy of Azerbaijan.

3. Formation of a joint stock company to explore northern provinces for oil (with the Russians owning 51 percent of the stock).

The premier refused these terms and returned to his capital on 11 March, nine days after the Soviets had been scheduled to leave, according to an armistice signed by the Japanese on 2 September 1945 making 2 March 1946 the final date of withdrawal.

In compliance with the treaty, British and American garrison troops were withdrawn prior to that day. However, the Russians announced via Radio Moscow on 1 March 1946 that some of its forces would begin to withdraw the next day while others would remain "until the situation was clarified."<sup>80</sup>

As expected, the Iranian government protested to all of the governments involved. Russia's response to this initiative was the opposite of that requested; verified reports indicated that Russian reinforcements were moving south from the Soviet border with heavy military equipment and a large number of tanks. The columns moved toward the Iranian regional capital of Tabriz and then west toward the Turkish and Iraqi borders. Shortly thereafter, Russian tanks were observed 25 miles from Tehran. The New York Times carried banner headlines: "Heavy Russian Columns Move West in Iran; Turkey or Iraq May Be Goal, US Sends Note."<sup>81</sup>

The note identified above was one sent by Secretary of State James Byrnes requesting the Soviets to confirm or deny the reports cited. This note was followed publicly on 16 March by speeches given by Byrnes and British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin. Byrnes' statement was a virtual ultimatum, the significance of which was not lost on the Soviets.<sup>82</sup>



Apparently, the Soviets decided they were not going to be able to get away with the rapid subjugation of Iran when it seemed that the United States and Great Britain actually would go to war to protect Iran. They quickly shifted gears and reopened discussions with Iran. In March 1947, Andrei Gromyko, Soviet representative to the UN Security Council, announced that all Soviet troops would be pulled out within five to six weeks "unless unforeseen circumstances arose."

While the Russians did withdraw their troops, it appears that they were successful in pressuring the premier into giving them most of what they wanted. However, subsequent internal revolts undid efforts by the Soviets, and Quaram was again in full control of the country by December. Turbulence continued for some time thereafter, though, with no one sure of what Soviet agents might attempt to do in Iran if given the chance.<sup>83</sup>

TURKEY: While the Soviet efforts to manipulate the situation in Turkey, or more accurately to affect control of the Dardanelles, did not include the brazen movements of troops across borders, they were, nevertheless, seen as equally serious. Truman had long felt that Turkey was the keystone to maintaining a land barrier between Russia and the increasingly vital eastern Mediterranean.<sup>84</sup>

The Russian initiative of August 1946 gains particular note only in its relationship timewise to the Greek crisis decision and its physical proximity to Greece. Since the time of Catherine the Great Russia had tried almost continuously to intimidate Turkey or openly to seize that portion of Turkey which controls the passage of ships from the Black Sea.

The most recent chapter in the continuing story actually began about a year and a half earlier when, in March 1945, the Soviet Union

announced that it would no longer honor its 20-year-old Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with the Turks. This treaty had guaranteed nonintervention with the Straits in return for free, unhindered passage. A few months later when the Turkish ambassador to Russia was paying a courtesy call on Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, he was told that he could have a treaty with Russia similar to that of Poland, but Turkey would have to:<sup>85</sup>

1. Cede selected Turkish border districts to Russia.
2. Revise the Montreaux Convention to allow Russia to share administration of the Straits.
3. Lease the Soviets strategic bases for naval and land forces in the Straits for "joint defense."
4. Abandon its ties with Britain.

The Turkish ambassador, of course, rejected this amazing "offer" out of hand. The Russians responded by unleashing an extensive propaganda campaign in the Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Rumanian and Russian press, claiming that the Turks had no business in the Middle East or the Balkans. According to the Soviets, the Turks were an Eastern power and should cede Eastern Thrace to Bulgaria.

This was the setting when, on 7 August 1946, Russia sent Turkey a diplomatic note demanding a "new regime" for the Dardanelles. While the exact contents remain unknown, the note probably called for the establishment of Soviet naval and air bases in Turkey, Soviet physical control of vital waterways and thus an end to the independence of Turkey as a sovereign state.<sup>86</sup>

Action by the United States again was required to prevent the Soviets from attempting to radically alter the eastern Mediterranean power balance. It is interesting to note that the United States was still willing

to appease the Soviet Union at this stage and to see some changes in the Montreux Treaty to Russia's advantage. The US recognized that the Soviet Union, now one of two global powers, had legitimate claims to unrestricted passage. However, the Soviet "all or nothing" attitude convinced the US to opt for the latter. The initial response was to send a naval task force into Middle East waters, including the new carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt. This was followed by a meeting on 15 August of a group that met informally (the National Security Council did not exist at this time). Other than the President, the group included Dean Acheson (Undersecretary of State), James Forrestal (Secretary of the Navy), Kenneth C. Royal (Undersecretary of War) and the Chief of Staff. The general consensus was that it was necessary to stand up to the Russians and that the United States must reply to their note "gently but firmly" and be ready to back it up.<sup>87</sup> As a result of this meeting, a note was prepared and sent to the Russians refusing joint control of the Straits and the establishment of Soviet bases in the area.

As in Iran, the Soviets backed off at this point and reverted to their propaganda attacks against the Turks throughout the Balkans.

GREECE: Although the Communist guerrilla groups did not make an all-out effort to displace the monarchy until 1946, the EAM (National Liberation Front) had been involved in the irregulars' fight against German occupation forces from the beginning. The EAM had in the field an army of about 20,000 men which were known as the ELAS (People's National Army of Liberation).<sup>88</sup> The ELAS worked with a similar but smaller rightist armed force called EDES until 1943. During that year, the EAM began its campaign to prevent the return of the exiled king.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill surmised what was occurring and executed a brilliant preemptive move by inserting British airborne troops into Athens, literally as the Germans were marching out of the city. The British then attempted to bring the commanding generals of the two major factions--General Saraphis of the ELAS and General Zervas of the EDES--together to gain agreement to support a compromise central government. An agreement was reached, but it proved to be totally unenforceable. Efforts by the British-supported central government to demobilize the guerrilla organizations caused the complete collapse of the tenuous agreement, and civil war broke out in December 1944. The rest of December saw extraordinarily brutal fighting for control of Athens, with a truce being signed the next month only after last-minute British reinforcements saved the situation. The truce called for a plebiscite on the king and national elections under allied supervision. The United States disagreed with Britain in this aspect; the American Government was not in favor of the return of the king. Additionally, it expressed its displeasure with the repressive measures of the Greek government and its excessive border claims against Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the plebiscite and election were concluded on 31 March 1946; the king was asked to return and the rightist groups took the majority of the votes. The vote was not so much an affirmation of rightist programs as it was revulsion at the terrorist tactics of the Left.

Following the March elections, there was a quiet period until mid-summer when the Soviets decided to make a major commitment to the area. The organization and coordination of a planned terrorist campaign developed from a meeting held in May 1946 in Bulgaria between a Russian agent and representatives from the Bulgarian, Yugoslavian and Greek Communist

Parties.<sup>90</sup> As a result of this meeting, the northern border regions (Appendix C) began to experience increased guerrilla activity. Simultaneously the groundwork was laid for an international propaganda effort at the Paris Peace Conference. Bulgaria laid claims to the portion of Western Thrace which it had claimed in consonance with the Soviet efforts to divest Turkey of control of the Dardanelles. Yugoslavia demanded an independent Macedonia, and Molotov completed the package by charging the "monarcho-fascist" Greek government with border provocations, territorial designs on Greek neighbors and internal terror and oppression.<sup>91</sup>

Late August 1946 saw the beginning of sustained guerrilla operations by well-organized and well-equipped forces operating from across the Albanian, Bulgarian and Yugoslavian borders. These Communist guerrilla forces proved to be very effective by their sabotage, political and economic destruction and proselyting activities in preventing the northern portion of Greece (Macedonia and Thrace) from recovering from the tremendous devastation inflicted upon Greece as a result of World War II. These actions plus the inability of the poorly trained and equipped Greek army to deal with the insurgent threat combined to undermine further the remaining authority of the central government.

Throughout the fall, the situation continued to deteriorate. Only the presence of some 16,000 British troops and considerable monetary support prevented total collapse.<sup>92</sup> Finally, on 19 December 1946, the UN Security Council appointed a commission to investigate the frontier violations.

The financial situation the commission found was no less serious than the military one. Notwithstanding the \$700 million in direct foreign aid from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) in

1945 and 1946, Greece had just managed to survive. The ability of the Greeks to support themselves at the beginning of 1947 was just slightly greater than it was immediately after the Germans had left.<sup>93</sup> During the prewar years, Greece had depended on exports to Central Europe and Germany in particular; now, all these markets were closed, and a psychology of helplessness had settled in on the Greek economy.<sup>94</sup>

With UNRRA funds due to run out on 31 March 1947, Greek Prime Minister Constantin Tsaldaris requested direct aid from the United States. Subsequent conversations among Undersecretaries of State Dean Acheson and William Clayton and Prime Minister Tsaldaris resulted in the dispatch of a United States mission to Greece under the direction of Paul A. Porter to make a survey of the situation. The US commission arrived in country 18 January 1947 along with the UN commission sent to investigate the frontier incidents. On 19 February, the US mission reported, just two days before the crisis week, that, unless Greece received immediate aid, the last vestiges of governmental control would disappear.<sup>95</sup>

Certainly, it takes no agonizing evaluation by the reader to appreciate the potential threat permeating the immediate external setting. The environment which the decision-making groups would use as a mind-set in dealing with the fast-approaching crisis was, from the distant observers vantage, clearly one of significant dangers with some rather clear choices. However, it is important again to enjoin the reader to remember that the appreciation of this external situation was restricted considerably by the internal setting within which the decision unit operated. As Jones noted:

"... the contrast between the political reality in Washington and the reality of human misery, physical wreckage, national debility, and mounting Communist menace in Europe and Asia was so great in early 1947 that the spectrum barely accommodated it."<sup>96</sup>

Let us now turn to the internal setting and the men who operated within it.



INTERNAL SETTING: While developing the internal setting, it is important to keep in mind that an additional consideration enters the decision-makers frame of reference at this level. While it is certainly true that, in most cases of international decision-making, a gap exists between the information available to the decision group and the population at large; in the case of the Greek crisis, this gap was extraordinarily wide. This was, in large measure, the result of specific efforts made by the Truman administration to play down the growing schism between the United States and Russia. As a result, prior to March 1947, the prevailing attitude in the general public toward international affairs was based on the experience of World War II. There was an optimism about the postwar period, belief in big-power cooperation and confidence in the United Nations as the dominating force in shaping international development.<sup>97</sup> The result of this considerable variance in information available, and hence perception, between the decision elites and the public was an ever-widening divergence of views and expectations as to the most appropriate role for the United States in the postwar world.<sup>98</sup>

As mentioned above, internal US attitude toward the rest of the world, and the UN in particular, was sentimental and unrealistic in an attempt to escape the responsibilities thrust upon the United States as a result of its victory in World War II. It was grounded in a belief that the machinery of the UN, with generous US bankrolling, would automatically assure peace without requiring the United States to change any of its old ways. In 1946 and 1947, it was hard for the American public to accept as dangerous to them the Soviet actions in Central Europe and the Balkans. The government's wartime campaign to create a picture of the Soviets as Allies worked to cloud the perception of the Soviet Union as an evil force

after the war requiring American affirmative action. This difficulty in perception was, in part, to be sure a function of willful self-delusion. To do otherwise required the individual to face the painful reality that world peace was not only unlikely, but stood a chance only if the United States became active as its guarantor. This, in turn, meant continued military obligations and sacrifice at home.

Through this combination of willful and self-imposed dillusion about the state of the world, the American public was essentially ignorant of the fused and complex actions occurring in Greece described in the previous section. US opinion was powerfully hostile to the gyrations of the incompetent and often corrupt Greek politicians who, as the American public saw it, were protected and sustained by the British.<sup>99</sup> Given the highly politicized nature of the individuals involved in any decision elite at the highest levels of a democracy, one can readily see that the threat perception takes on the additional perspective of intense perceived danger to continued political survival. As a measure of the intensity of this postwar neoisolationism, one only needs to remember that, prior to March 1947 and the advent of the Truman Doctrine, the domestic political situation was such that it was possible for Congress to refuse to grant large amounts of aid to Europe. This was a further indication that US public opinion was continuing to move away from interest in international affairs, large federal budgets and interventionist economic techniques.<sup>100</sup> The precipitous reduction of the Army (which included the Army Air Corps) from 1.9 million men in 1946 to .9 million in 1947 is an excellent example of the lack of interest in the cares and needs of the outside world and, in this case, in the American ability to influence actions abroad.

This widely felt desire on the part of the American people to disengage themselves from a new-found role they did not want was beginning to diverge significantly from the realities of the decision elites in Washington by February 1946.<sup>101</sup> On 22 February, George F. Kennan, then acting ambassador to Moscow, sent back a long and compelling analysis of the impossibility of achieving positive relations with the Soviet Union. Acheson later wrote of this cable: "It had a deep effect on thinking within the Government, although Government response with action still needed a year's proof of Soviet intentions as seen by Kennan . . . his predictions and warning could not have been better."<sup>102</sup> Clark M. Clifford (assistant to the President) was one of those influenced by Kennan's note. He clearly expressed the growing sense of threat felt by key administration personnel even at this early stage when he observed that:

"Genuine agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union was rendered impossible by Soviet paranoia and isolation . . . any effort at cooperation that the Soviets might manifest must be interpreted as a deception to gain time, build strength and prepare for further assertions of its claim to world domination."<sup>103</sup>

From this came the de facto recognition that US-Soviet relations would be that of adversaries; far less clear was what the US response to Soviet overtures should be. Clifford apparently was influential during this period in developing the movement toward a consensus that economic aid and not arms should be the basis of the American overseas effort.<sup>104</sup>

By the middle of 1946, Truman's senior advisors were beginning to sense the dangers involved in the widening gap between actual relations between the two superpowers and the situation as perceived by the general public.<sup>105</sup> However, this was an election year, and there was even more intense pressure to delay any revelations at least until after the Congressional elections that November because both the liberal Democrats and



labor strongly supported continued relations with Russia. This unfavorable political climate caused the Truman administration to defer even the initial planning stages for reconstruction aid for Europe until after the fall elections.

These conflicting pressures were responsible for one of those political gaffs characteristic of indecisive policy formation. On 12 September 1946, Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace (a longstanding advocate of Soviet accommodation) made a speech urging the administration to adopt a policy of cooperation with the Soviets and acknowledging the Soviet right to a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. This occurred while Secretary of State Byrnes was engaged in international negotiations with the announced purpose of preventing the Soviets from asserting political control over Eastern Europe. In response to press questions, Truman said he had read and approved Wallace's speech. This resulted in considerable confusion, annoying American Allies and giving the impression at home that Truman did not understand the most basic elements of American foreign policy. Consequently, the President's popularity dropped to 32 percent, as opposed to 87 percent when he took office.<sup>106</sup>

Due to a number of complex factors, the Republicans captured both houses of Congress for the first time in 14 years. When the 80th Congress convened for the first time on 3 January 1947, the Republicans enjoyed advantages of 51 to 45 (Senate) and 245 to 118 (House)--the classical formula for inaction and national frustration with an apparently weak Chief Executive from one party and Congress controlled by the other. This switch was particularly noteworthy in that the election saw a significant increase in Republicans of conservative persuasion (known as the class of '46) in the Senate. Men such as John Bricker of Ohio, William Jenner of

Indiana, William Knowland of California and Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin came in on the promise of tax cuts, reduced Federal expenditures and activities and a return to "business as usual."

As Jones noted in his book, Fifteen Weeks: "Nothing appeared further removed from the realities of American political life at the opening of 1947 than that the US would shortly assume the responsibilities of its power . . ."<sup>107</sup> The newly elected Speaker of the House, Joseph Martin of Massachusetts, reflected Congress' sense of priorities when he noted:

"There is danger that war-stricken nations may be led to rely too much on the United States and try too little to help themselves . . . we must avoid the danger of so depleting and weakening ourselves as to be dragged down with them."<sup>108</sup>

As Congress began to go about the business of its business, it rapidly became clear that the all-absorbing question of the day was not the proper role of America in the world or whether the President could or would lead the country to shoulder heavy world responsibilities, but how far the 80th Congress would roll back New Deal legislation, cut appropriations for the armed services and foreign relief and carry us back into the isolation of the 1920s and 1930s.

Secretary Byrnes' correspondence during this period reflected this same attitude. In speaking with the British ambassador to the United States on 4 January, he noted that the United States had "no commitment at all . . . to the Greek government to provide assistance."<sup>109</sup> The same reservation continues in a telegram sent to the US ambassador to Greece, Lincoln MacVeagh: "We continue to feel that American public opinion will not for any protracted period look with favor upon extension by the US of support to a Greek government which does not enjoy popular support . . ."<sup>110</sup> Within the senior governmental circles, these views started to change as

information from the Porter mission began to arrive in late January. The level of threat increased considerably and is well-reflected by these telegrams sent on 17 and 19 February respectively. In a telegram from Mark F. Ethridge, US representative on the UN Commission of Investigation, to Secretary of State Byrnes, Ethridge notes:

"I am convinced and the conviction is shared by other members of the commission the Soviets feel Greece is a ripe plum ready to fall into their hands. . . . General feeling of commissioners with whom I have close contact . . . is that if Greece goes not only Near East goes but also Italy and France."<sup>111</sup>

On 19 February, Lincoln MacVeagh pleaded:

"Nature of crisis here such that I . . . recommend strongly to Secretary that he come to Greece en route to Moscow. . . . His presence here even for a day should have incalculable effect. . . . Firmly convinced this is real thing and we cannot hope for economic or political stability in absence of all-out effort on our part. Next few months should determine whether Greece will collapse. . . ."<sup>112</sup>

In the public sector, perceptions were different; even though throughout January and mid-February of 1947 the radio brought increasing reports of economic chaos, world hunger, economic despair and a drift toward communism, controversy in the US political arena was focused, almost to the exclusion of all else, on whether the President's budget should be cut by \$16 billion to allow the 20-percent tax reduction promised or by only \$4.5 billion with a smaller tax cut.<sup>113</sup> In so doing, the new Congress was creating more complex problems in the international area by failing to realize the critical role thrust upon the United States as the generator of funds and goods to rebuild Western European society and economic structure. The 80th Congress was hardly on board when a resolution was introduced to prevent further tariff cuts, and, indeed, some members of the House Ways and Means Committee were in favor of higher tariffs.<sup>114</sup>



Such was the internal setting with which the decision unit had to cope. This environment appeared particularly insidious with its multiple pressures or threats; the messages from MacVeagh and Porter foretelling collapse without US intervention versus the public desires for noncommitment and a strong isolationist, Republican-dominated Congress. As the eve of the decision week approached, the sense of threat both from external events and internal politics was unquestionably strong. Yet it was equally clear that no consensus existed as to what America's role ought to be or how it should execute its responsibilities.

THE DECISION WEEK: When the British ambassador to the United States, Lord Inverchapel, entered Secretary of State Marshall's office at 1000 Monday, 24 February, to deliver the official notes, the decision week was already several days old.

FRIDAY, 21 FEBRUARY: Marshall, who had just recently taken over the reins at state, had just left to make his first address as Secretary of State at Princeton's bicentennial celebration when Dean Acheson received a call from the British Embassy. The call was from the ambassador's first secretary, H. M. Sichel, requesting an immediate audience with Marshall to deliver "a blue piece of paper" (the trade name for a formal and important message from His Majesty's Government). Acheson, a long-time friend of the ambassador, talked him into leaving a copy of the note with the State Department that day and arranged for a formal meeting with Marshall upon his return to Washington Monday morning. Acheson later recorded: "Henderson shortly received not one but two documents. They were shockers. British aid to Greece and Turkey would end in six weeks. . . ." <sup>115</sup>

The note on Greece recalled the mutual understanding between the United States and Britain that, for military and political reasons, Greece

should not be allowed to fall under Soviet control. The note went on to summarize the economic situation (on the verge of collapse, requiring close to 40 million pounds to stabilize) and the military situation (Greek forces in serious need of reequipping and reorganization plus a spring offensive against the ELAS added an additional 20 million pounds). Altogether, the British note estimated total support required at 60 to 70 million pounds or \$240 to \$280 million. Finally, item number 12 of the note concluded:

" . . . His Majesty's Government having already strained their resources to the utmost to help Greece and have granted, or undertaken to grant assistance up to the 31st of March 1947. . . . His Majesty's Government, in view of their own situation find it impossible to grant further financial assistance to Greece."<sup>116</sup>

Acheson immediately realized the importance of the message he held in his hand. He instructed Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near East and African Affairs, to assemble personnel from the Near East and European Divisions that evening to develop preliminary reports for the next day concerning: (1) facts as seen by US representatives abroad, (2) funds and personnel currently available, (3) funds and personnel required and (4) the significance of an independent Greece to Western Europe.<sup>117</sup> Acheson directed that Admiral Forrest Sherman, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, and General Lauris Norstad, Army Directorate of Plans and Operations, be contacted so that they might provide whatever military input was required.

With this done, Acheson immediately called President Truman and Secretary Marshall. Truman indicated his high level of perceived threat in noting to Acheson that this was not just Greece he was concerned about; it was the entire future of Europe, the Middle East and even Southeast Asia.<sup>118</sup>

The meeting requested by Acheson was held that evening and was chaired by George F. Kennan, the recent past envoy to Moscow. No official notes were kept of this meeting, but it was the consensus of all the participants that the United States should give "extraordinary" economic and military aid to Greece.<sup>119</sup> After discussion ended, Henderson made assignments, and, by midnight, the first draft of a situation paper was prepared on Greece, about eight hours after Henderson had received the copy of the British note!

SATURDAY, 22 FEBRUARY: Saturday was a busy day for Henderson and Acheson's other chief assistant, John D. Hickerson, Deputy Director, Office of European Affairs. The two men spent long sessions with Admiral Sherman and General Norstad to consider all aspects of the problem. Acheson was in and out during the day conferring with his staff and providing guidance.

SUNDAY, 23 FEBRUARY: Henderson delivered the refined and buttressed proposals to Acheson for his consideration before submitting them to Secretary Marshall upon his return the next morning.

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY: Secretary Marshall arrived early that day and read the British notes and the memorandums prepared by Acheson and his staff. Marshall then told Acheson that he (Acheson) would be responsible for the action on the Greek crisis as Marshall would be gone to a foreign ministers conference in Moscow within the week.<sup>120</sup> At 1000, Marshall received Ambassador Inverchapel. The meeting was quite brief, with the ambassador presenting the notes orally and leaving shortly thereafter.

Following the official presentation of the British notes, there was a series of meetings, the first following lunch at the White House



among Truman, Marshall, Acheson, Robert P. Patterson (Secretary of War), Robert P. Forrestal (Secretary of the Navy) and Admiral Sherman and General Norstad. This was followed by a meeting between Acheson and the service secretaries in Acheson's office. The consensus of both meetings was that it was vital to US security for Greece to be strengthened and that only the United States could do the job.<sup>121</sup> That evening, an important meeting was chaired by Henderson and Hickerson as this same decision unit began to widen the scope of the government position. The final draft recommended that:

1. The Department of State, at the highest level, enter immediate discussions of this matter with the Departments of War, Navy and Treasury.
2. The four departments lay their findings before the President.
3. The matter be discussed frankly and secretly with key Congressional leaders.
4. Instructions be issued at once to the combined Chief of Staff to begin studying the technical aspect of the problem.
5. Appropriate steps be taken to acquaint the American people with the necessity of rendering assistance.
6. Appropriate measures be taken to assure the immediate delivery to Greece of such military equipment as could be transferred without passage of special legislation.
7. Appropriate legislation be drafted and sent to Congress at the earliest possible date which would enable the government to extend large credits or grants to Greece.
8. Such additional legislation be enacted as required to enable the government to provide the Greek government necessary military equipment.<sup>122</sup>

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY: The important event of this day was a meeting conducted by Acheson with key political, economic, legal and information officers of the State Department. From the ideas generated from this meeting, plus the working proposals submitted the previous day, Acheson and his principal assistants wrote the final version of the "Position and Recommendations of the Department of State Regarding Immediate Aid to Greece and Turkey." The more important of the recommendations included in that final document are that:<sup>123</sup>

1. The administration propose to Congress immediate legislation authorizing the Export-Import Bank to extend loans.
2. All military equipment that could be sent under existing legislation be sent to Greece and legislation be proposed to authorize more.
3. Legislation be proposed to authorize sending administrative, economic and financial government personnel to Greece.
4. Plans be worked out for a US economic organization in Greece to oversee the use of US funds and supplies.
5. Measures be taken to inform the public of the urgent need for aid to Greece.

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY: With a meeting set for the afternoon to brief the President, the Secretaries of State, War and Navy spent the morning hours meeting to consider the final form of the position and recommendations highlighted above. The various secretaries agreed with the proposition and acknowledged that "the Greek crisis required the fastest possible action."<sup>124</sup>

The actual decision that afternoon at 1500 was, in reality, no decision at all but a confirmation of a presupposed option. Truman required

no real convincing, being more concerned with how to convince Congress and the American public. He had concluded that "Greece needed aid, and needed it quickly. . . . The alternative was loss of Greece and the extension of the Iron Curtain, across the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>125</sup>

And, so, in an almost anticlimactic way, one of the most far-reaching decisions made by any American President was now an accomplished fact. With the decision environment now completed, it should be possible to identify what role the perception of threat and time compression played, if any, in this decision.

THE ROLE OF THREAT AND TIME PERCEPTION: While no one case study will provide proof of all of the components of the theory presented in the previous chapter, the Greek crisis of 1947 appears to substantiate several of the major tenets. Numerous instances were noted throughout the crisis period which virtually all of the decision-making units demonstrated perceptions of high and increasing threat coupled with inadequate or severely restricted decision time.

Just how profound this sense of danger was is illuminated very articulately in this unpublished early draft of the President's speech to Congress:

"I lay before you today one of the gravest problems of national security ever to confront the nation. We are face to face with a crisis in foreign policy. . . . But upon the decision that must be made now will depend the security and well-being of the American people."<sup>126</sup>

This sense of danger appears again in this observation made immediately after the British note was received:

". . . the towering new fact of which Acheson was now appraised: the imminent cessation of British support. The probability of Greece's early fall was now transformed into a certainty unless the US should act to prevent it. . . . Moreover, urgency would have to be measured on an entirely new scale. . . . For not just the fate of Greece was at stake. Greece was the key to a much wider situation: the freedom and security of a large part of the world."<sup>127</sup>



The actions portrayed support expected performances; problem-solving tended to be rigid and formal and there was a loss of complexity in political cognizance and a low tolerance of ambiguity.

Likewise, time compression was apparent in the actions of the decision unit. While the British had indicated they would stay for at least six more weeks, the decision was made in less than a week to alter profoundly the direction of American foreign policy. The perception of inadequate time was well-documented throughout the period with frequent reference to the need to act now. President Truman's comments provide a good indication:

"The urgency of the situation was emphasized by dispatches from our representatives in Athens and Moscow. . . . From Athens, Ambassador MacVeagh sent a picture of deep depression and even resignation among Greek leaders. . . . Time, MacVeagh urged, was of the essence."<sup>128</sup>

As with the threat indicators, time perception indicators were likewise identifiable; time became more important as the week wore on, there was increased reliance on stereo types, and rapid group consensus impeded exploration of alternatives.

As an additional item of note, the concept of critical boundary comes into play in this case. American leaders, while not articulating the belief, established by their actions that the United States' critical boundary in the Near East included the non-Sovietization of Iran, Turkey and Greece.

It would appear then that the four hypotheses under investigation are supported; time was certainly seen as a very major factor throughout. At this stage, the decision unit increasingly focused almost exclusively on solving the Greek problem without serious discussion of the consequences of the actions in Greece and its impact on America's role in the world.

Through a number of factors, including time, there was really no consideration of true alternative courses of action at all. Finally, the number in the decision unit did get smaller as the crisis grew: from an initial working committee of 16, on 21 February, down to a constant of 7 with the final briefing and decision by a group of 3.

This then concludes our look at the Greek crisis of 1947. Let us move forward about three years and see how this same President and a modified cast of players handled another major crisis.

### CHAPTER III

#### FROM BEYOND THE PERIMETER TO CRITICAL

#### BOUNDARY: KOREA 1950

"250925 (June) James fragmentary rpts . . . indicated North Koreans launched Sunday morning attacks generally along entire border."129

With this cryptic message, the United States and the world received first notice of what was to become America's first exposure to the no-win war. John E. James, a UPI correspondent, sent the above message some five hours after seven reinforced North Korean Peoples Liberation Army (NKPLA) divisions conducted a highly successful predawn assault. Inexplicably, the James report arrived two hours ahead of the message sent by Joseph Muccio, the US ambassador to Korea. It was not until 2136 hours, 24 June (the reader is reminded of the date/time differences between Korea and Washington, D.C.) that the first official word of the North Korean invasion reached Washington.

During those first hectic days it was hard to tell who was more surprised; the soldier at the front or the diplomat in the rear. A decent gauge of the level of psychological and physical dislocation generated by the NKPLA attack is reflected in the following extract of a National Security Resources Board memorandum issued a few days after the invasion:

"The invasion of South Korea came as a surprise and a shock not only to the people of the United States and the world, but also to the people around this table, whose job it is to keep the President correctly advised."130

President Truman's decision to commit the United States to the defense of South Korea is considered by many to be one of the most important



decisions of the 20th Century. Its impact was to be far-reaching; in addition to the loss of some 33,629 men,<sup>131</sup> it contributed substantially to a containment policy in Southeast Asia, set the course for US-Chinese relations that would last a generation, and presented America with its first experience of a frustrating, faction-building process known as limited war.

This chapter will look at the events of 25-30 June 1950 in light of the framework developed in the first part of the study. In order to present data and events in a manner most conducive to a clear conceptualization of the role of perceived threat and time compression, the chapter is organized using a combination of situational and chronological ordering devices. The first portion will briefly review the relevant events in Southeast Asia from 1945 to 1950. It will be followed by an attempt to develop the national and international settings, forming the immediate perceptual environment of mid-1950. With the development of the "definition of the situation," a detailed account of the important events from 25 June 1950 to 30 June 1950 will follow, enabling the reader to understand what happened and to explain the role of the phenomenon under investigation in the output of the Truman decision unit. The final section of the chapter will reflect on what was uncovered and suggest some possible conclusions to be drawn.

THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTHEAST ASIA 1945-1950: As the previous chapter points out, events on the international scene since 1945 had caused the American decision unit to see international affairs as essentially dichotomous, threatening, and requiring the application of countervailing force. Mr. Truman had first developed this impression during the Potsdam Conference when he noted to then Secretary of Defense Byrnes on 5 January

1945 that another war was in the making. This view was reinforced in three areas of confrontation that were to occur in the 1945-50 era: these were Iran (1946), Greece (1947-48), and Berlin (1949). These confrontations were viewed by the US as successful contests of strength and will. However, it would not be overstating the opinion of the period to say that United States interest in Korea at the close of the Second World War was minimal at best. The initial division of Korea was an administrative convenience established by the American and Russian military forces to facilitate disarmament of residual Japanese units on the Korean peninsula. Believing the task of collecting the items of war throughout the total of Korea to be beyond the capability of the American units available for the task, the US asked Russia to conduct the collection process north of the 38th parallel. This was the initial step in the well-detailed road to the situation which manifested itself in the summer of 1950.

To understand the "why" of US intervention into Korea, we must address a point of some sophistication that is not immediately obvious. The point in question is the abrupt and dramatic change that occurred in the regional balance which the United States had sought to achieve. Korea had been seen as unimportant for a simple reason. At that time it was expected by American strategic planners that China would, under Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, become the bulwark of containment against Russian desires in this part of the world. Japan was to be kept emasculated and a relative nonentity in the power equation of the region. In such an environment Korea would easily be controlled and would be of no particular interest.

As it became more and more obvious that Mao Tse Tung was the probable next leader of mainland China, the United States was forced to

reorient its efforts to develop a restraining force in Southeast Asia. The other reasonable possibility was a revitalized Japan. Slowly but surely the realization of the strategic position of the Korean peninsula, in relation to the South China Sea and as an invasion springboard to Japan, began to make itself felt. However, by the summer of 1950 this idea was still very much formulative (remembering the Peoples Republic of China did not exist until 1 October 1949). A reflection of this ambiguous status will appear later in the chapter in some of the statements made by various statesmen.

It is not without some justification that the NKPLA had determined that the United States would not contest a fait accompli by the North Koreans,<sup>132</sup> given the ambivalent attitude at this time and the particularly vociferous attacks being made by senior Republicans in Congress about staying out of this part of the world. Unquestionably, the North Koreans must have been as flabbergasted on the 30th of June as was President Truman on the 25th.

This then was the "macro" environment which encompassed the specifics of the immediate internal and external settings as they existed in late June of 1950. It remains for us now to complete the decision units perceptual set by discussing the domestic setting.

INTERNAL SETTING: The internal setting involved, at a minimum, two interrelated and interacting forces: (1) prominent or key personalities and (2) the domestic political situation. The importance of either of these can, and will, differ drastically depending on the time, nation, and personalities involved. In the case of Korea, two personalities were to prove to be the dominant factors in the direction and form of the decisions of 25-30 June 1950. Because of the prominence of President Truman



and Secretary of State Acheson in these proceedings, it is appropriate to take a moment to briefly sketch their personality traits of relevance to their crisis decision-making.

President Truman personified the American national experience after 1945 when he described becoming President as having been "suddenly catapulted into the midst of world-shaking episodes."<sup>133</sup> He conceptualized the role of himself as President as filling the people's desire for a strong President, champion of the common man, with a historic mission to be ready to make decisions.<sup>134</sup>

The President had a penchant for equating problems he faced with historical precedents. For Truman, "today's problems are largely yesterday's implications . . . he held that for almost all present problems there were precedents that would provide clear guides to the right principles of action."<sup>135</sup> In addition to history, a characteristic feature of President Truman's pattern of decision-making was the way he sought to base decisions upon group deliberation among his advisors. Paige noted in his book, The Korean Decision, that

"when faced with a major occasion for decision, the President's customary practice was to gather his principal advisors, to state or have someone state the matter for decision, to elicit individual expression of opinion, to encourage further discussion for the clarification of issues, and then to decide or to delay decisions."<sup>136</sup>

In a great many respects, the view of Acheson and the President were almost one and the same. This was particularly true of the perceived roles of the Secretary of State and of the President. Acheson saw the proper role for the Secretary of State as the "first minister" and "senior member of the cabinet."<sup>137</sup> Acheson felt that he should be the principal, unifying, and final source of recommendations to the President on foreign policy. Acheson's style of leadership and organization to produce

recommendations was very similar to that stated above for the President. Thus Secretary Acheson expressed skepticism of the "too facile and pat," shunned the idea that American foreign policy could be based on readings taken from a piece of moral "litmus paper."<sup>138</sup>

With this brief look at the two dominant personalities involved behind us, it remains to build around them the domestic political situation. When the occasion for decision in Korea was abruptly thrust upon them, the President, Secretary of State, and other administration leaders were caught up in a complex network of reciprocal influences and expectations that characterize executive-legislative relations. This relationship was in a particularly sensitive state because this was a midterm election year and the subtle linkages between political leadership and public opinion were at the forefront.

Two issues of the day brought sharp partisan conflict and growing bitterness in Congress. These issues were the administration's policies toward Nationalist China and the claim that the State Department was infiltrated by Communists. The split on these issues was particularly bitter and caused the disintegration of what had been a bipartisan effort in international affairs. The 80th Congress had had agreement among 82 percent of the Republicans and 92 percent of the democrats on foreign aid bills.<sup>139</sup> This schism started a period of acrimony between the parties and also split the Republican Party over Senator McCarthy's tactics.

In June 1950 the relations between the administration and the Congress were characterized by a complex set of conflicting supportive and avoidant relations. The President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense were all under critical attack; the President for his overall leadership, Secretary Acheson for his China policy (of noninvolvement on

China's civil war) and for harboring subversives, and Defense Secretary Louis Johnson for sacrificing military needs for budget compression.<sup>140</sup>

It obviously takes no great perceptive faculties to see that the internal setting for the coming crisis was something less than ideal, but this only provides one aspect of the situational set. The other part is the external setting.

EXTERNAL SETTING: By June 1950 the United States policy makers had generally come to view the world as bi-polar. One camp was seen as a combination of Russian national power, universal revolutionary ideology, and an international political movement. The other camp was seen as a coalition, centered on American power, of nations determined to escape Communist domination.<sup>141</sup>

From presidential speeches made during the spring of 1950, an observer could note the international situation being described as one in which the United States of America stood as the leader of an international moral crusade against an evil and aggressive foe. For the President, Communism was an offensive designed to "penetrate, divide, confuse, and subvert free peoples."<sup>142</sup> In order to cope with the international environment, the President called for two main courses of action: "First, we cannot compromise our own moral and ethical beliefs, and second, we cannot isolate ourselves."<sup>143</sup> Thus, the President summoned the American people to demonstrate the moral and material superiority of the free world over Communism.

However, the President was not the only voice speaking out; Secretary Acheson, a believer in Real Politik, saw as the central task of American diplomacy in the post-war era the creation of a balance of power such that the Soviet leaders could be brought to a general live-and-



let-live policy. In working toward this policy, Acheson attempted to limit the area of American interest in Southeast Asia. One of the oft-quoted pronouncements on this area of interest or "defense perimeter," as it was referred to, was from a speech made to the National Press Club on 12 January 1950 in which he stated:

"This defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukus Islands . . . from the Ryukus to the Philippine Islands. . . . So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these against military attack. . . . Should such an attack occur . . . the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitment of the entire civilized world. . . ."144

While not using the term, Secretary Acheson was delineating the United States' critical boundary in Asia. This view was a combination of beliefs that the United States could not protect everything whilst at the same time fearing that any place that the free world showed weakness, a political vacuum would be created into which the Soviets would flow.

The United States began to feel a shift in the international power balance because of two events. These were the explosion of an atomic bomb by the Soviet Union and as mentioned earlier, the emergence of Communist China in late 1949. It gradually became obvious that some of the previous assumptions on which the old balance was predicated were no longer valid. As a consequence, the President reacted on 30 January 1950 to a lowered sense of security by asking for a major policy reappraisal by State and Defense Departments. The study was done between February and April 1950 and then submitted to the President. The President then gave it to the National Security Council for study (later known as NSC 68). The National Security Council was in the process of cost analysis when the

war broke out, but was understood to have recommended a greatly increased military budget and improvement of conventional forces.<sup>145</sup>

As a potential source of trouble, Korea was included in NSC 68 along with Finland, Berlin, Iceland and Yugoslavia. Yet the predominant opinion of the intelligence community during the spring of 1950 was that there would be little chance of an all-out invasion of South Korea.

SATURDAY, 24 JUNE: Although some writers have attempted to build a case that the attack by the North Koreans was either encouraged or instigated by the South Koreans and Americans, there is an overwhelming body of information which shows conclusively that the attack was a complete surprise. This needs to be qualified by saying that US intelligence agencies were aware of North Korea's aggressive posture as early as in March. However, the Supreme Command Allied Powers (SCAP) evaluated the reports as doubtful. The Pentagon agreed with this evaluation and anticipated only guerrilla action. As late as 18 June 1950, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and Secretary of Defense were briefed at SCAP headquarters and given no indication of a pending North Korean attack.<sup>146</sup>

So, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, it was a tremendous surprise to both the soldiers and diplomats when the NKPLA struck at 0400 hours, 25 June 1950. Late on the evening of 24 June, Washington time, the first official notice was received from Ambassador Muccio, and stated in part:

"According to Korean Army reports . . . North Korean forces invaded Republic of Korea territory at several points this morning. . . . It would appear from the nature of the attack and the manner in which it was launched that it constitutes an all-out offensive against the Republic of Korea."<sup>147</sup>

This precipitated a small group of officials hurriedly meeting at the State Department at approximately 2230 hours. After conferring together, Dean Rusk, Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, John Hickerson (Secretary for UN Affairs) and Frank Pace (Secretary of the Army), called Acheson at his farm at 2245 hours recommending immediate notification of the UN of what had happened and requesting an emergency meeting. Acheson agreed to these measures and then called the President, who was at his home in Missouri, at 2320 hours to inform him. Acheson advised the President not to return immediately as the situation was still too uncertain. However, even at this early stage Secretary Acheson's perceptual set appears to have been well down the road to being established. As the President was to recall to his administrative assistant, George Elsey, "Acheson informed me that the North Korean forces had invaded South Korea in an all-out effort to overrun the South Korean Government."<sup>148</sup> (emphasis added)

The information from the fighting front was fragmentary; neither the ultimate intentions of the attackers nor the extent of their immediate gains were clear.<sup>149</sup> The general feeling at the time was that the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) could hold its own against an attack by the North unless active support was being given by the Soviets. If the invasion was serious, they had no doubts but that it was a Soviet-directed operation.<sup>150</sup>

According to Glenn Paige, "The officials shared a strong sense of the emergency of the situation--the need to do something and do it without delay. The North Korean invasion had caught them by surprise."<sup>151</sup> And so it had. Compounding the sense of threat inherent in the attack was the tremendous distance between the officials responsible for making these decisions and the events themselves. Certainly no small amount of anxiety



was added by the fact that it was discovered that there was no position paper prepared on Korea for policy guidance. All contingency plans developed had been built on the assumption of a general conflagration, in which case Korea was to be left to fend for itself.

SUNDAY, 25 JUNE: On arriving at the State Department, Acheson received signs of a worsening situation. From Tokyo, John Foster Dulles (who happened to be there on an inspection visit) cabled Acheson, "To sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to war."<sup>152</sup> To this was added a report from Ambassador Kirk (Moscow) stating:

"This aggressive North Korean military move against the ROK, represents a clear-cut Soviet challenge which in our opinion US should answer firmly and swiftly as it constitutes a direct threat to our leadership of the free world against Soviet Communist Imperialism."<sup>153</sup>

Ambassador Muccio notified Acheson that he was evacuating all US dependents and noncombatants, and that President Rhee was moving his capitol south to Suwan. Reports were coming in that indicated the South Korean forces were disintegrating. In view of events, Acheson decided to call Truman and recommend that he return to Washington, D.C. The sense of compressed time already felt by the President was indicated in this telephonic conversation, as he told the Secretary of State, that "some decision would have to be made at once as to the degree of aid or encouragement which our government was willing to extend to the Republic of Korea."<sup>154</sup>

On the plane returning from Independence, the President reflected on historical precedents and noted that:

"The North Korean attack was the same in nature as the German, Italian and Japanese aggression that had led to World War II. . . . if the Communist leaders were appeased, then gradually the scale of violence and the number of participating states would increase to global dimensions . . . considered it right to resist promptly and effectively the North Korean aggression."<sup>155</sup>

The President then made crystal clear the sense of threat he perceived in the situation. The opponent was not the NKPLA but Communism as a whole. The attack becomes critical to American values not because of South Korea, but because of the implication it had for spreading into areas of truly central importance to the American people.

President Truman arrived in Washington, D.C. at 1920 hours and went immediately to the Blair House where a group of 13 selected advisors were waiting for him. There were representatives from State (Acheson, Rusk, Webb, Hickerson, Jessup), from Defense (Johnson, Pace, Matthews, Finletter) and from the Joint Chiefs (Bradley, Collins, Sherman, Vandenberg).

The President opened the meeting by encouraging discussion and having Acheson recap the last 24 hours. Secretary Acheson then advanced five proposals worked out by his staff for discussion. These were:<sup>156</sup>

1. SCAP furnish ROKA additional military equipment.
2. US warplanes cover the withdrawal of American dependents.
3. US warplanes be authorized to destroy KPLA tanks and planes that attempt to disrupt the evacuation.
4. Consideration be given to further aid in support of the UN resolution calling for a North Korean withdrawal.
5. Seventh Fleet neutralize the Formosan Straits.

By the end of the discussion, all had been approved except number five, which the President decided to "sleep on."

The general opinion that developed out of this first meeting contributed to later perception of time compression by the dual tendency to accept fragmentary reports of limited ROKA counterattacks as a sign of their ability to hold the NKPLA, and a parallel tendency to underestimate

the capabilities of the North Koreans. Thus the consensus of the President and his advisors, based on the general trend and earlier calculations, was that the South Koreans could probably contain the attack unless the North Koreans had received extensive assistance. The invasion was seen as part of a Soviet grand strategy, with many possible ramifications; primarily as a threat to Japanese security and to the collective security program built by the UN.<sup>157</sup>

The situation of this first meeting was not seen as a question of whether to intervene or not. However, as each advisor gave his opinion it became obvious that a kind of unspoken agreement existed that "whatever had to be done to meet this aggression had to be done. There was no suggestion . . . that . . . the US could back away from it."<sup>158</sup>

The conference ended with a general sense of resolve among all present. The agreed recommendations then were passed telephonically to MacArthur. Jessup was later to maintain that "on the basis of this conference the US--under the banner of the UN--was prepared to accept the catastrophe of World War III if it proved to be unavoidable because of American refusal to accept the intolerable evils of appeasement."<sup>159</sup>

MONDAY, 26 JUNE: Word that Kim Il Sung had rejected out of hand the UN proposal at 2030 hours on the evening before set the tone for possibly the most critical day of the Korean crisis. By mid-afternoon, a telephone conference with General MacArthur confirmed the prospects for survival of the Republic of Korea were diminishing at a rapid rate.<sup>160</sup> Late in the afternoon SCAP sent a situation report painting a grim picture of events:

"Piecemeal entry into action vic. Seoul . . . not successful in stopping the penetration . . . tanks entering suburbs of Seoul . . . South Korean units unable to resist determined Northern offensive. . . our estimate is that a complete collapse is imminent."<sup>161</sup>



The implications of this message are obvious; the threat was much more serious than originally estimated and the time to deal with it was somewhat less. Upon hearing the report, President Truman had Acheson set up a second meeting for 2100 hours with the same group that had met the previous evening, stating that the situation was so threatening as to require it. Truman's perception of the situation is highlighted clearly in the recollections taken down by Elsey at the time. In a conversation that afternoon, Truman told Elsey, "Korea . . . is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won't take any next steps."<sup>162</sup>

The meeting followed the same format as the previous night. Agreement existed at the onset among the conferees that if the United States did not come to the aid of South Korea within the next several hours, there might be no further decisions to be made concerning the preservation of the Korean Republic.<sup>163</sup> Secretary Acheson made a series of proposals which he and his staff had worked out that day. They were:<sup>164</sup>

1. Navy and Air Force should be instructed to give "fullest possible support" south of the 38th parallel.
2. Orders be issued to cause the 7th Fleet to prevent either China from attacking the other.
3. Military forces (US) in the Philippines be strengthened and increased military assistance be provided to the Philippine government. That military assistance be accelerated to Vietnam and a MAG (Military Advisory Group) be sent there.

With minimal discussion, the recommendations were approved as presented. It can be seen by the contents that ground intervention was still not contemplated. However, the really critical point was that the US had indicated its intention to commit American combat power.

The conference and the President drew historical parallels between the present situation and axis powers in World War II, much as Truman had done on the plane two days earlier. The President and his advisors reached agreement that a failure of the United States to save ROK would be intolerable. They calculated that with every blow to ROK that went unanswered, the reputation and prestige of America sank lower and lower. The visibility of collective security was also perceived to be in jeopardy. Thus while the loss of Korea as a piece of real estate would not have meant a direct threat to American military security, the President and his advisors perceived a logical progression which would inevitably menace the safety of the United States. This idea was summed up by Secretary Acheson when he noted that the North Korean action "was a challenge to the whole system of collective security not only in the Far East but everywhere in the world. It was a threat that all nations would be intimidated by this show of force."<sup>165</sup>

The decision to meet force with force in Korea was essential. It was the unanimous view of the political and military advisors of the President that this was the right thing to do.<sup>166</sup> With the closing of this meeting, the United States had taken its first gigantic step into the Korean War. Air and naval forces would be committed to battle. The decisions reached at the Blair House were announced the next day (27 June).

TUESDAY, 27 JUNE: This was a day of no great activity germane to this study. Efforts centered around UN activities and attempts to get Russia to stop the North Koreans. On the home front, the President entertained a delegation from Congress and received support from Dewey, the titular head of the Republican Party.

WEDNESDAY, 28 JUNE: Throughout this period, the President was having all concerned departments do restudies and reevaluations of potential results of the Korean action on areas of concern on the Soviet periphery. The President and his advisors did not make any new decision on this day but scanned all incoming information for indicators of a Soviet response to the request to stop the North Koreans.

THURSDAY, 29 JUNE: The situation was to climax on this day, with word of Seoul's fall the day before and reports coming in from SCAP indicating imminent disaster. A 0700 report from SCAP estimated ROKA casualties of about 50 percent and stated that it was questionable whether ROKA forces could hold the Han River Line.<sup>167</sup> As the report was followed by more of a similar nature, it became obvious to all that the air and naval power would not do the job. With the situation becoming continuously less stable, the Secretary of Defense called the President and arranged a meeting at 1700 that night.

The same basic group that had attended previously was on hand with the addition of Symington of the National Security Resources Board and Ley of the NSC staff. The meeting centered around Secretary of Defense Johnson who gave a presentation on the main difficulties hampering military action in Korea. He then made a series of recommendations with the major one being to put service and combat troops into Pusan. The President was uneasy about US troops being committed, but Acheson showed him the Soviet response to a query made to Russia on 27 June asking the Soviets to call off the NKPLA. The note indicated that it would do nothing to stop the North Koreans but also that they would not intervene in Korea against US troops. This information opened the way for the eventual entry of large-scale American ground troops.<sup>168</sup>



The meeting lasted only 40 minutes and produced two directives:<sup>169</sup>

(1) restrictions on aircraft to stay below the 38th parallel were lifted and (2) service and combat troops were authorized to be dispatched to Pusan to secure the embarkation facility. As the President's advisors left the White House, they were unaware that North Korean tanks had already broken through the Han River Line and were pushing remnants of ROK units before them.

The meeting on 29 June, as with the two earlier ones, demonstrated by comments of the participants and actions taken that the situation was perceived as having crossed the critical boundary, thus creating a significant threat to vital US national interests. The definite destruction of the idea that the ROK forces could handle the situation by 29 June and the increasing rate of collapse acted to continuously raise the sense of time compression. The less the myth of ROK ability to handle the invasion was believed, the more urgent became the perceived requirement for immediate decisive action.

FRIDAY, 30 JUNE: At approximately 0400 hours, an urgent telegram arrived belatedly from SCAP headquarters stating the results of MacArthur's personal visit of 28 June. The message said in part:

"On June 1950 CINCFE informs the JCS, after a recon of the Korean battle area, that the Korean Army was in total confusion . . . the most the South Korean Army could hope to accomplish would be to retard the advance of the enemy. The South Korean Army was incapable of united action . . . the only assurance . . . to regain lost ground would be through the commitment of US ground combat forces."<sup>170</sup>

MacArthur recommended one Regimental Combat Team (RCT) and two divisions to follow as the forces to be sent. The message was passed on with the urging from SCAP that "time is of the essence and a clear-cut decision without delay is essential."<sup>171</sup>

After a conference between members of the JCS, Secretary Pace (Army) was informed of the report. He in turn called the President, who immediately approved the release of the RCT but withheld decision on the two divisions. The last of the major meetings was set up for 0930 hours at the White House.<sup>172</sup>

The meeting was to last but 30 minutes and centered around the determination of the adequacy of two divisions. With virtual unanimous approval, it was decided that SCAP would be authorized to send in the two divisions and was given "full authority to use troops under his command."<sup>173</sup>

With this done, the meeting ended and the Pentagon officials left to begin the massive preparations required to implement the decisions taken. President Truman addressed a Boy Scout convention and went for a cruise on the Presidential yacht. So ended the week that was.

CONCLUSIONS: According to David Reese in his excellent book, Korea: The Limited War, the decisions made between 25-30 June had many roots. Among these were:<sup>174</sup>

1. The desire to uphold law in international life.
2. The desire to uphold collective security.
3. The contest of will between east and west.
4. Korea was seen as "another anschluss."
5. It was seen as the application of the US policy of containment.
6. The defense of Korea would lend credibility to US defense commitments to NATO by demonstrating American willingness to meet its treaty obligations.
7. Complex "Pacific considerations" centering around the Japanese industrial base.

This author would posit that these explanations for action track very well

with the evidence here presented to demonstrate the sense of perceived threat and its raising during the period in question.

Of major importance is the realization that the threat perceived was only symbolically connected with the physical entity called the Republic of Korea. A brief reflection on the external setting for this decision unit causes the reader to see that this threat was very real indeed from the point of view of the participants. The fact that the level of perceived threat rose during this six-day period was demonstrated both in the comments provided and in the actions these decision elites executed. Moving from cautious, noncommittal responses on 24 June to the commitment of two full divisions on 30 June.

The sense of time compression is equally shown, moving from the initial belief that ROKA units would stop the attack on 24 and 25 June to the plea of MacArthur on 29 June for "a decision without delay" if South Korea was to be held. The sense of urgency displayed by the participants became progressively greater as the week advanced culminating in decisions being made telephonically in the early morning hours, and instructions to SCAP being sent by voice instead of cable.

Additionally, a reasonable case can be made for the proposition that the speed of decision-making was artificially rapid, and the best example in itself of the effects of perceived time saliency. The course of events following Truman's decision shows no overwhelming objective requirement demanding action by 30 June. The American Far East Command was able to have a 560-man force (Task Force South) in Korea within 24 hours of the President's decision to commit ground troops. Yet the North Koreans, even with minimal American resistance, were unable to reach and infest the Pusan perimeter until 4 August--some five weeks later.



The fact that more time was objectively available is also substantiated by the fact that the US divisions which participated in the perimeter defense arrived between 6 July (the 24th Infantry Division) and 18 July (1st Cavalry Division). At a minimum at least one additional week for the consideration of options and strategies. That the decision-making unit did not perceive this is directly attributable to the effects of crisis situations as described in chapter one.

As indicated in the description of the sequence of events, the sense of time given in the initial stage was such that the decision group really never discussed any alternatives whatsoever. The pressure to produce directions, and not having a policy paper on this situation available, worked to limit the decision unit to a narrowed focus, with progressive refinements of the initial policy direction being considered rather than a discussion of other real alternatives.

The fact that President Truman and his advisors focused on the immediate needs goes almost without saying. Prior to the crisis period, virtually all written evidence of the importance of Korea in America's long-range plans indicated at best a secondary importance. The area was not even considered important enough to seriously contest Congress' defeat of the Korean supplementary military aid bill in late 1949. Had anyone during this time stated to the President that some six months later he would take actions which would commit us to support of Vietnam, cause a 20-year estrangement between the US and China, intensify US-Russian enmity, and provide the major cause for loss of the White House to the Democratic Party, and all of this to protect South Korea, it is highly unlikely that he would have been greeted as a sage.

The validity of the hypothesized relationship between level of threat and number of decision-makers likewise appears to be sound in this case. The initial meeting on 25 June included just 14 men. While members of Congress should theoretically been included into the decision process, "it was the unanimous view of those involved that there was inadequate time to allow this machinery to work."<sup>175</sup> Thus this decision which would have global implications was made by a group of no more than 14, while a case can be made that, in fact, the decision was made by no more than 8.

It would appear then, that in the case of the Korean crisis the working hypotheses have failed to be disconfirmed and, indeed, are supported.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The time has come to reflect for a moment on the theoretical ground from which this enterprise was launched, its relevance to the crisis periods surveyed, and the implications which can reasonably be drawn from that analysis. It was not, and is not here, claimed that this work would provide definitive explanations to the important (but necessarily select) group of questions posed in the first chapter. The most that could be hoped for here is a reasonably detailed "reconnaissance flight" over the prominent terrain of the conflict environment and the role of threat perception and time compression. Hopefully, the work will be found to be of adequate detail and direction to act as a guide for any topographer who might follow.

To assist the reader in the discussion to follow, the four working hypotheses presented at the beginning of this work are provided again. During a crisis situation:

1. As the perception of threat increases, time is seen as an increasingly salient factor.
2. As the perception of threat increases, decision-makers focus on immediate future needs to the exclusion of long-range considerations.
3. The shorter the perceived time available to decision-makers, the fewer real alternative courses of action will be considered.
4. As the perception threat increases, the number of decision-makers decreases.



It will be remembered that the analytical framework to be used depended on a large extent on the reader retaining before him, as he reads the various chapters, the manifestations posited for individuals and/or groups making policy decisions in high stress situations. The individual cases then were demonstrated through the statements and actions of those involved and the correlation of these reactions with those found to be representative of high threat/compressed time performance.

In the first chapter, a profile was developed which delineated the nature of the conflict environment and the importance of several key ideas such as "critical boundary" and "spiral of effect." The study by Postman and Bruner<sup>176</sup> was cited for its contribution to the field and several of its conclusions were presented. Among the more important findings germane to this work were indications that perceptual behavior becomes disrupted and less adaptive, that maladaptation in the direction of aggression and escape occurs, and finally that untested hypotheses are fixated recklessly. It was noted that a host of studies had identified such manifestations as increased error rate, use of simpler modes of response, problem-solving rigidity, and a lowered tolerance for ambiguity as characteristic of individuals or groups in high threat, crisis situations. Indications were given that perceived time compression was frequently an accompanying factor and compounded the difficulties for the decision-making unit. Consequences of time pressure tended to cause responses which increased propensity to rely on stereotypes, acted to disrupt problem-solving activities, and impeded the use of available information and exploration of alternatives.

This explains how people are said to function, or rather malfunction, during periods of crisis. What does the information generated from the case studies indicate?

The first case study was unique in several aspects; most important to this study, it did not conclude in a decision of war. The fact that such was the case does not mean that the propositions were proven false. It was, and is, possible to avoid the movement to war whilst still facing the same forces as those crises which do end in war, otherwise the world would be in a constant state of open warfare. February 1947 undoubtedly supports the researchers' findings almost to the point. The time factor was a particularly effective example of the critical importance of perception versus reality to the individuals concerned.<sup>177</sup> Unquestionably, the decision-makers in State and War Departments had a much greater objective period of time available to them to attempt to attenuate the developing confrontation than was generally accepted. However, what was perceived, and what was acted on, is an application of the Thomas Therom mentioned in the first chapter--the decision-making elites saw the time as short and so it was in its consequences to the problem-solving process. Given the tremendous imbalance in forces-in-being and geographic proximity of those forces to the contested area, it can be fairly argued with an equally high level of assurance that the decision-making unit focused on their immediate interests to the exclusion, and possible detriment, of their long-range objectives. Certainly prior to 12 March 1947, no one would have accepted as credible the claim that the United States would be drawn to the brink of another devastating war over the continuance in power of a repressive monarchy which half the American public was unaware of and the other half disliked.

The period leading up to the start of the Greek crisis of 1947 was also an excellent example of one of the key elements that act upon, and is acted upon, by the conflict environment. The United States demonstrated

in its deliberations during the crisis period a strong sense of extended natural boundaries; the countries forming the "land barrier" between the Soviet Union and the Eastern Mediterranean came rapidly to be considered an essential part of America's extended defense perimeter and its occupation by an unfriendly force, Russia, was unacceptable.<sup>178</sup>

The immediacy with which the decision unit believed it had to make a decision and get it implemented unquestionably affected the failure of that group to search for alternatives. Given the high threat environment posed by the significant Soviet force advantage in the external setting, and the hostility toward foreign involvement shown by the Republican-controlled Congress and the populace at large in the internal setting, there were at least several other alternatives which should have been considered. However, from the first meeting of the special committee onward, there was no exploration of alternative courses of action, but instead almost immediate consensus on the one they were predisposed toward.

The final proposition, dealing with the relationship of the level of threat and the number of decision-makers involved, is equally well supported. The initial meetings of the special committee contained some 16 individuals.<sup>179</sup> As the crisis became, or appeared to the decision elites to become more intense, the size of the group was reduced. From this initial group, just seven men attended the final preparatory meeting and there were three present for the actual decision itself.

The study which followed transplanted the reader some three years ahead into the summer of 1950 and into another decision that was to have ramifications far beyond the formal cease-fire finally signed. Again, it would appear that the facts of the case support the hypotheses. Time was unquestionably salient in this case and in fact demonstrates probably the



most severe impact on the decision-making process of the two studies. The tremendous distances between those on the scene responsible for implementing directions and those responsible for generating them unquestionably acted to accentuate the sense of time compression.<sup>180</sup> Reports from Korea and from SCAP continuously pressed home the need to act almost immediately.

Just as definitely it can be seen that the immediate needs or goals, as then perceived by the Truman decision-making unit, eclipsed the long-range goals established and proclaimed during the previous several years. Korea had been declared to be outside the US-Asian defense perimeter and of no particular importance to vital American concerns. Yet the decision was made to commit ground forces and actively support anti-Communist governments throughout the Southeast Asia area; effectively committing the United States to involvement on the Asian landmass it had steadfastly said it wanted no part of.

The case for the third proposition (search for alternatives) is again equally strong. Numerous authoritative sources support the fact that there were virtually no alternatives recommended. Time was seen as so critical that the need for action was predominant.

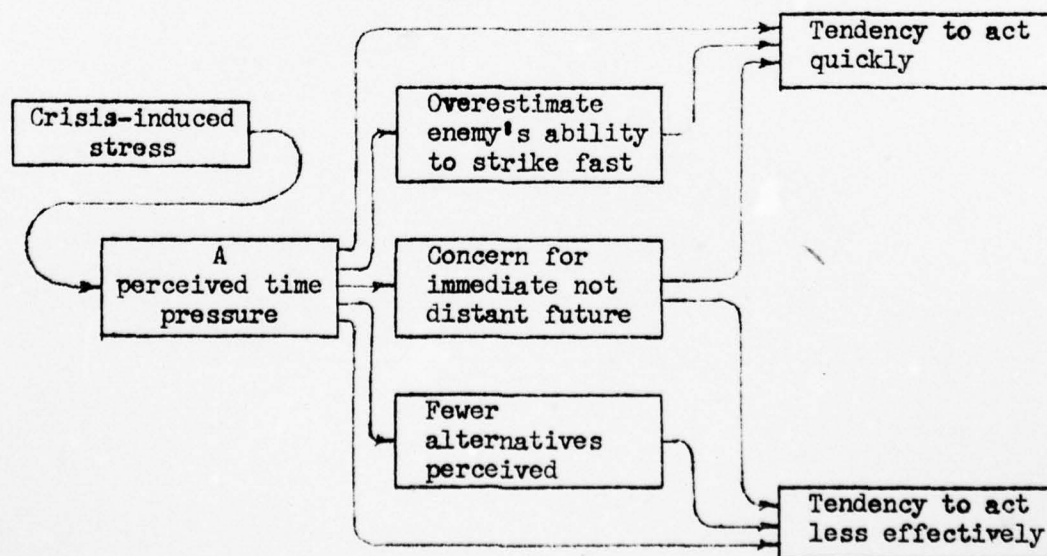
The case of Korea is an excellent example of another of the characteristics of problem-solving in stress environments. Stereotypes and simplification in problem recognition were noted by several authors, although not in that terminology, when describing President Truman's propensity for finding correlaries in recent history for the actions taken by the NKPLA. The attack was compared to the Nazi attack on Poland, and the idea of letting the North Koreans continue unopposed was likened to the disastrous appeasement process prior to World War II. A monolithic communism was seen as "extending its tentacles in a master plan to topple

or dominate" all governments in the area. The complexity and implications of the commitments made in those few days were completely subsumed in the vision of an ultimate mission of the United States to prevent the Communist juggernaut from crushing an "outpost of the free world"—the question rapidly came to be viewed in terms of good and evil, with the proper choice preordained.

What then is the impact of the studies conducted on the efficacy of the four propositions presented for investigation? It is the opinion of the author that the four hypotheses, dealing with the saliency of time reduction in decision-making unit size, search for alternative solutions, primacy of immediate goals, and size of the decision group have, with a reasonably high degree of assurance, shown themselves to be accurate statements.

From the analysis above, it is possible to develop graphically a representation of these relationships. They appear as follows:

#### Threat, Time and Decision-Making



It would appear then from these cases that there exists a reasonably clear relationship between perceived threat, time compression and crisis decision-making. Threat then becomes a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in the conflict environment. Threat, or the level of threat, is probably the single most important factor in the decision-making process in international crises. If this be the case, then future efforts to control, dissipate or eliminate situations and/or actions which generally precipitate high threat situations should prove of great value in the continuing search for conflict control.

The conclusion one draws from this study is sobering; that men rarely perform at their best under stress. The most probable casualties of high threat are the very abilities which distinguish men from other species; to establish logical links between present actions and future goals; to create novel responses to new circumstances; to communicate complex ideas; to deal with abstractions; to perceive not only black and white, but also the many shades of grey in between; to distinguish valid analogies from false ones, and sense from nonsense. The law of supply and demand seems to operate in the crisis environment in a perverse manner; as the crisis situation increases the need for heightened discriminatory powers, it also appears to diminish the supply. A persuasive case can be made that crisis-induced stress often affects behavior in ways that are inconsistent with calculated policy-making. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, there is no reason to believe that the ability to cope with intense stress has materially improved since 1950.<sup>181</sup> Thus, even if the findings represent tendencies rather than laws of crisis behavior, they may provide some assistance for speculation about policy-making under crisis conditions.



A flow diagram integrating salient features of the previous models and crisis policy-making appears in appendix G.

As promised in the introductory section to this thesis, an effort will be made to present observations that would assist in retarding the effects of high threat. The actions listed below could be expected to assist in managing conflict situations:

1. Where relative capabilities is a major component of the crisis decision, the decision-making group should call on information that is at variance with the prevailing consensus.

2. When decision-makers operate under stress, they do not seek or accept the advice of habitual critics and so should encourage and listen closely to the criticisms from trusted advisors.

3. Decision-makers should be specific in establishing limits in instructions to the military and should provide a check system to insure compliance.

4. Conscious efforts should be made to increase sensitivity to the adversary's frame of reference.

5. Decision-makers should avoid taking steps that seal off the opponent's "escape routes."

6. Every effort should be made to slow the pace of crisis events.

7. Care must be taken to recognize the military's institutional perspective and limited range of concern when accepting their advice.

The final commitment made at the beginning of the enterprise was to provide additional working hypotheses applicable to the military on the basis of this research. The following appear to the author to be valid working hypotheses supported or developed by this study that are of particular value to the student of military art and worthy of further pursuit:

1. In a crisis situation, decision-makers will tend to perceive the range of their own alternatives to be more restricted than those of their adversaries.

2. As stress increases, decision-makers will tend to perceive the range of alternatives open to them as becoming narrower.

3. As threat increases, decision-makers will tend to rely more on ad hoc groups.

4. There is a positive relationship between X's expression of hostility to Y and Y's perception of threat.

5. In a crisis situation, there is a tendency to perceive one's central value as severely threatened and then to distinguish many other important values also threatened.

6. The closer an adversary acts to one's psychological space, the greater the sense of threat to one's values.

7. The greater the perceived threat, the less the frequency of interaction.

8. Increased threat and shortened time tend to increase the tendency toward rigidity of perception and thought.

With the consummation of this final segment, the investigation is complete. This does not by any means mean that the questions are exhausted. Scientific investigation is like the pursuit of the horizon, every step opens new perspectives, a solution of any problem raises a host of new questions.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

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ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KANS F/G 5/4  
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#### CHAPTER IV

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<sup>181</sup>Holsti, Crisis - Escalation - War, 209.



## APPENDIX A

### CHRONOLOGY - GREECE

- \* 21 February 1947 - Newly appointed Secretary to State Marshall leaves for speaking engagement at Princeton.
  - British Embassy First Secretary delivers copies of formal British note ending British support of the Greek government.
  - Hickerson and Henderson chair a multi-department work group to develop options and means.
  - Acheson telephones Truman and Marshall.
- 22 February - State Department-led group spends day refining proposals/recommendations generated from previous nights meeting.
- 23 February - Henderson delivers the refined and buttressed paper to Acheson for review.
- 24 February - Acheson briefs returning Marshall.
  - Marshall receives British ambassador and officially receives the British notes.
  - Working group meeting takes position US should intervene--Marshall supports recommendation.
- 25 February - Acheson conducts meeting of key Washington figures on crises.
  - State Department staff includes ideas developed and produced final draft recommendations to go to President Truman.
- 26 February - Morning meeting with Secretaries of War and Navy to confirm recommendation completed previous evening by State.
  - Afternoon Marshall and Acheson meet with Truman and get his approval of State's proposed program.
- 27 February - Meeting with key Congressional leaders.
- 12 March - President Truman unveils the Truman Doctrine in his speech to Congress.

APPENDIX B

DECISION-MAKING UNIT:

GREEK CRISIS 1947

POSITION	NAME
President	Harry S. Truman
Secretary of State	George C. Marshall
Secretary of War	Robert P. Patterson
Secretary of the Navy	Robert P. Forrestal
Under Secretary of State	Dean Acheson
Director, Office of Near Eastern Affairs	Loy W. Henderson
Deputy Director, Office of European Affairs	John D. Hickerson
Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations	Arthur H. Vandenburg
Recent past Ambassador to Moscow	George F. Kennan
Presidential Advisor	Averell W. Harriman

APPENDIX C

AREA MAP

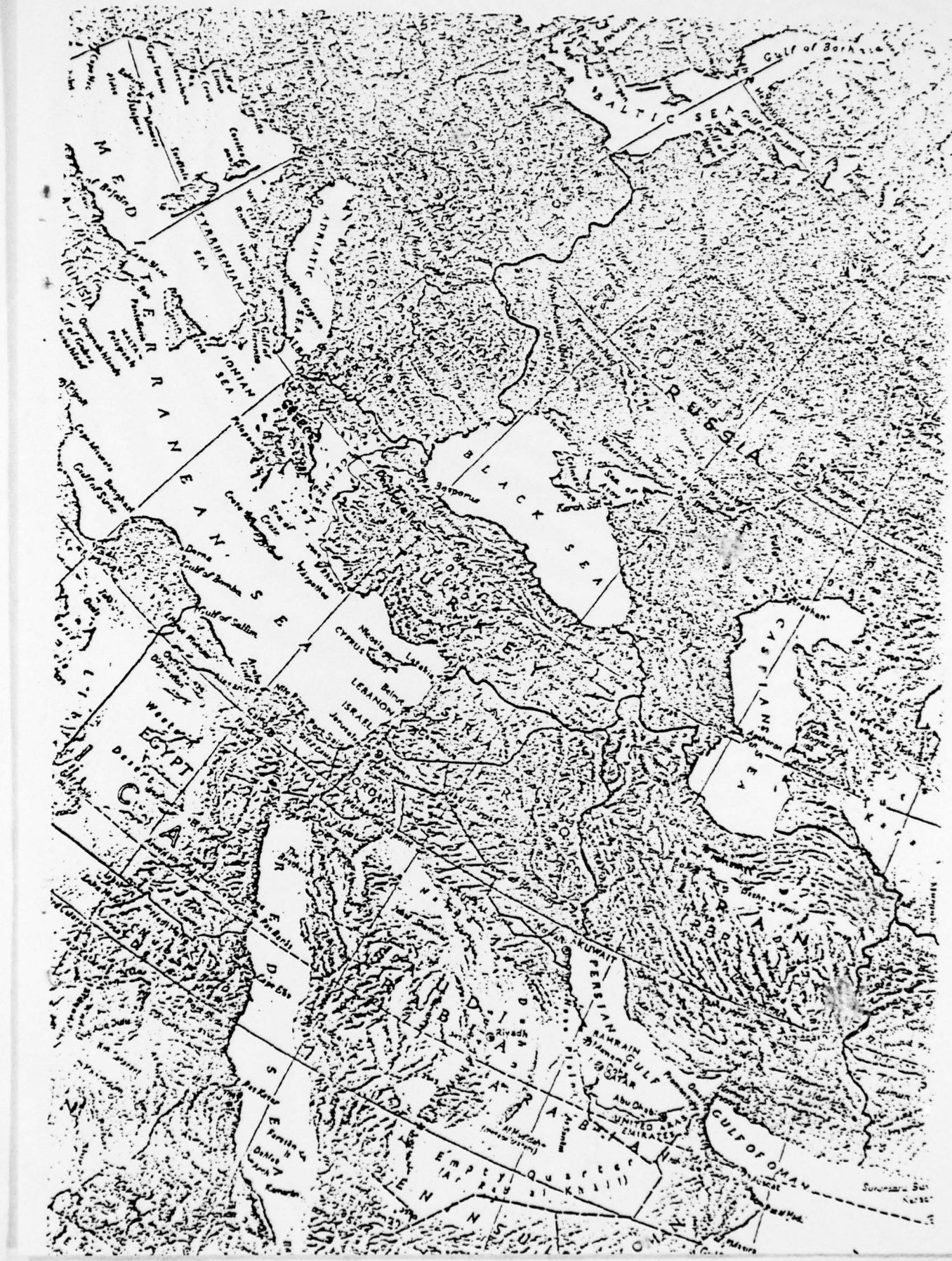




APPENDIX D

AREA MAP







## APPENDIX E

### CHRONOLOGY - KOREA

- 12 January 1951 - Acheson declares Korea outside US defense perimeter.
- 19 January - House Representatives defeat Korean Supplementary Aid Bill.
- 30 January - President asks for security reevaluation.
- 10 May - South Korean government warns NKPLA moving large numbers of troops south.
- 18 June - SCAP briefs JCS Chief and Secretary of Defense that no immediate danger exists.
- 25 June - NKPLA attacks.
- James sends first report to Washington.
  - Ambassador Muccio sends report.
  - Acheson informed and calls President at Independence, Missouri.
  - First meeting at Blair House--fleet in Formosan Strait, aircraft support dependent withdrawal.
- 26 June - Military situations worsen in Korea.
- Second Blair House meeting--more aggressive air cover, strengthening MAG's.
  - UNCOK report verified NKPLA invasion of ROK.
  - Dewey pledges bi-partisan support.
- 27 June - No major actions--continued monitoring or reports.
- 28 June - MacArthur conducts personal recon of battle area.
- Continued scanning of reports by Washington.
- 29 June - Reports indicate ROKA in bad shape.
- President presides over NSC meeting--decides to allow aircraft to pursue over North Korea, send in ground troops to secure Pusan harbors.
  - One RCT authorized for commitment for defense of Pusan harbor.

30 June - MacArthur's personal recon indicates desperate situation.

- Last major conference held at White House--authorized SCAP to commit "all resources at your command."

APPENDIX F

DECISION-MAKING UNIT:

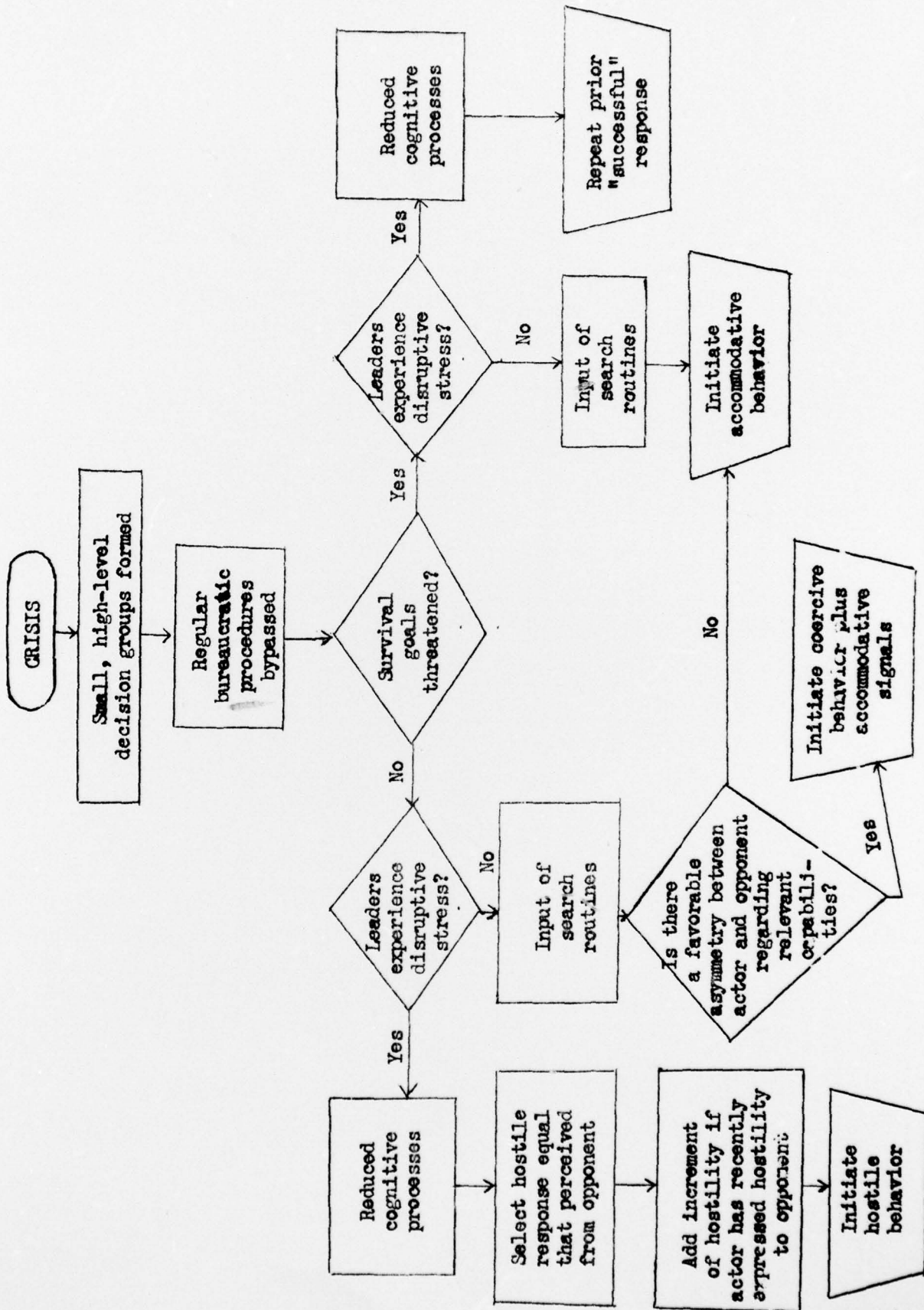
KOREA 1950

POSITION	NAME
President	Harry S. Truman
Secretary of State	Dean Acheson
Secretary of Defense	Louis Johnson
Secretary of the Army	Frank Pace
Secretary of the Air Force	Thomas Finletter
Secretary of the Navy	Francis Matthews
Chairman - JCS	Omar Bradley
Army Chief of Staff	General Collins
Air Force Chief of Staff	General Vandenberg
Chief Naval Operations	Admiral Sherman
Assistant Secretary for Far East	Dean Rusk
Assistant Secretary for United Nations	John Hickerson
Under Secretary of State	Frank Webb
Ambassador at Large	Phillip Jessup



APPENDIX G

POLICY-MAKING FLOW CHART



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